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THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle
Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED AND REVISED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

DURING THE YEAR 1881.

VOL. XXVII.

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TO
THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH
IN
THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS
BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY,
WORLD WITHOUT END,
AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD
OF ISRAEL ;
TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE ;
TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF
SANCTIFICATION ;
BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE
FREE GRACE OF GOD
HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SITTING OF THE REFINER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—Malachi iii. 3.

THIS is spoken of as one of the results of the coming of the Lord: he would test and try all things, destroy the false and the evil, and make those pure whom he permitted to remain. Behold, the Promised One has come! He whom Israel sought suddenly appeared in his temple as the messenger of the covenant. Glad were the eyes of Simcon, and Anna, and all those who waited for him, and glad this day are our voices as we proclaim that the Messiah has appeared. The glorious Son of God, the anointed of the Most High, has been among men, and faithful witnesses have testified concerning him, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." That coming, heralded by songs of angels, and prophetic of countless blessings, should have been a day of unmingled light to men; but because of hypocrisy, pride, and self, it was not so; on the contrary, it was to many a day of darkness and not of light. We have abundant historical evidence that our Lord's first advent was a day of great trial to the Jewish people; and when we remember the siege of Jerusalem, and kindred events, we do not marvel that the prophet asked, "But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope." His ministry tried the religion, the orthodoxy, and the saintship of the period, and because it revealed the hollowness of the whole of the profession of the day, it aroused all the enmity of the religious classes. Those who were the leaders of the so-called religious thought of the age were aroused to hate the Lord Jesus, and to take a delight in nailing him to the tree; for his teaching was so true and good that their word-chopping and ceremony-making could not endure it.

Our Lord, when he came, sat as a refiner, and assayed the age then present; and ever since then his gospel in the world, his Spirit, his teaching, yea, the very fact of his life,—these all together have been a test, a trial, a sort of standard of weights and measures among men. All things are on their trial. You are constantly hearing of this time

No. 1,575.

and that time as being "crises"; and the saying is true. There is always a crisis to something or other during these days of the Lord's sitting as a refiner. All things are being thrust into the furnace, and the fire is kept burning at a white heat, and nothing evil can abide the flame. Everything that is good shall be conserved, purified, made brilliant; but all that is evil, be it what it may, the whole world over, since Christ has come, shall be tried and dissolved as by fire. When our Lord comes the second time, the trial will be still more intense. "Who shall abide the day of his coming" when he shall still further be revealed, and when his purpose shall be rather that of judgment than of mercy?

It is well for us to know that, whenever Jesus Christ draws near to a soul, he comes in utmost mercy to make it clean. Because he is in himself the incarnation of ineffable love, his coming always means that he is about to purify the soul, for the highest mercy is to rid us of sin. The grandest thing that God himself can do in the purpose of his love is to purify us into his own glorious holiness. Christ loved his church, and this is how he showed it; "He gave himself for it, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." The Well Beloved seeks to purify his chosen by the washing of water through the word. It is the way his love takes: for true love doth ever choose the way of holiness. That love which would lead its beloved into sin is lust; it deserves not the name of love; but true love will ever seek the highest health and wholeness (which is holiness) of its object. Pure affection will grieve to see a fault, mourn over a folly, and seek to remove a blot. Perfect love seeks the perfection of the thing it loves. Such is the perfect love of Christ: whenever he comes to a soul in love he comes as a refiner. He comes with this object,—to take away the dross from the silver, and to make the fine gold purer still. In his sharpest dispensations he means no ill to us, but the divinest good; seeking not to grieve, but to lead up to the eternal blessedness, of which the root and flower are both found in absolute perfection.

If any of you, my hearers, are seeking the Lord at this time, I want you to understand what it means: you are seeking a fire which will test you, and consume much which has been dear to you. We are not to expect Christ to come and save us in our sins, he will come and save us from our sins; therefore, if you are enabled by faith to take Christ as a Saviour, remember that you take him as the purger and the purifier, for it is from sin that he saves us. "They shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." This is the particular salvation which he aims at. Though he does deliver men from hell, it is by delivering them from the sin which is the fuel of Tophet's flame. Though he does give us heaven, yet his way of bringing us to heaven is by giving us a heavenly mind, a heart obedient to the holy and loving Father. The refinement of our nature and character is the way in which his infinite love most wisely displays itself.

We are going to talk of this purifying process. "He shall sit as a refiner." *How is the refining carried on?*

It is carried on in part *by the word of God*. "Is not my word like a fire?" Wherever the gospel is preached thoroughly, out and out, it is a wonderful consumer of dross. I have known certain congregations

that have been dead in worldliness, the haunts of wealthy professors, whose love to Christ is a mere pretence. Close to them I have seen another church which has been lively in spirit, and full of zeal for the Lord. Whence the difference? The reason has usually been this—that in the one case there was man's ministry, and in the other there was the word of the Lord. Ministries of the Spirit worldly people cannot bear. They are displeased with a plain testimony. It rasps their conscience. There is no need to turn them out of the church; they drop away of themselves: it is not the place for them; it is too hot for them, I mean too holy, too spiritual, too devout. By-and-by they are offended, and murmuringly they prepare to emigrate. There are so many things that they do not approve of, they see so much that is dreadfully orthodox, narrow-minded, and bigoted; and so they trot off among their own cattle. Yes, and so they should. That is God's way of keeping his flock to itself. Those that are rooted up by the word of God are beat rooted up. We may always be practising this kind of separating the tares from the wheat, for it leaves the testing with God and a man's own conscience, and hence no injustice will be done. It would be ill by excommunications to seek to root up the tares from among the wheat, lest we root up the wheat with them; but by the word, if it be preached in the power of the Holy Ghost, the process will be always going on. God's furnace stands in Zion. If any of you are ever displeased by the word, I pray you be displeased: we shall certainly never alter the word for you. If the truth comes too closely home to your consciences and angers you, be angry, not alone with him that speaks it, but with him from whom it comes; and then you will see the folly of such anger, and humble yourselves before God, and accept his truth, which will live, and your sin shall die. God grant it may be so.

Another purging operation is by causing his chosen to have *more fellowship* with his own blessed and glorious self. Of all the means of purging the heart none surpasses this, for when the Lord in great mercy draws his child near to him, and makes him feel his love, and know it beyond a doubt, then the favoured heart longs to be holy in all things. When the Lord fills his servant full of his love, and makes him to be joyed and overjoyed with the sweet consciousness that he is the Beloved's, and that the Beloved is his, then a holy jealousy burns within the soul, and the heart cries, "Is there anything that can grieve the Beloved? Let it be slain! Is there aught that I think, or wish, or say, or do, that might break the sacred spell of communion, and cause him to be gone? Let it be driven out at once!" The heart institutes a diligent search that, if possible, it may put away the accursed thing, that Christ may not be grieved. Of all fires that ever burned this is one of the fiercest. Jealousy is cruel as the grave, and a holy jealousy does stern work in our hearts with sin. It hangs up the darling sin before the face of the sun, and calls upon the fowls of heaven to come and feast upon the slain. Oh, that we knew Christ better, and lived more in the light of his countenance, for then should we be purged as with the spirit of burning.

After all, *the Holy Spirit* is the great fire that burns in Zion to purge believers from the love of sin. It is he that makes use of the Word, and makes use of fellowship, and makes use of everything else, to sever

sin from the saint, and take away the dross from the silver. He is the immediate agent of our sanctification, all else we must regard as only the means in his skilful hand. To him be our love and our praise evermore.

As a subsidiary means the Lord uses *providence*. I have no doubt that he uses very frequently gracious providences, as we call them; that is, providences which please us by gratifying our natural wishes. Some people have been sanctified by prosperity; but I do not think very many have been. Few good medicines are pleasant to the palate. If we were as we ought to be, every joy that comes to us would tend to make us grateful, and so it would make us love God; and what is that but to be more like God and more holy? But, alas, in that we are weak through the flesh, the gentler modes of love far oftener fail than her rougher processes. It remains then that, if we cannot be preserved in honey, we must be salted with fire, lest corruption should take hold upon us. Such is the stubbornness of our flesh, that the Lord uses for fuel in his furnace sharp and heavy trials of different kinds. Adversity assumes many forms, and in each and all of its shapes the Lord knows how to use it for his people's benefit. Christ sits as a refiner when he takes away prosperity, and brings the wealthy down to poverty. He often refines men by the losses which they sustain of beloved friends. Bereavement burns like a blast-furnace; and, oh, how much of carnal love has been consumed by it!

We have known persons greatly purified by the Holy Spirit by passing through depression of spirit, inward grief, and soul sorrow. Spiritual pain has been blessed to some, and physical pain to more. In itself pain will sanctify no man: it may even tend to wrap him up within himself, and make him morose, peevish, selfish; but when God blesses it then it will have a most salutary effect—a suppling, softening influence. Sorrow is made to act as a kind of flux upon the hard metal to make the dross separate from the precious ore.

Yes, *affliction* is what most believers think of when they read such a passage as this; but I warn them not to think too much of it, for that is not the refiner's only fire, nor is it even his best fire. Affliction is but one part of the machinery of the Royal Refinery,—one of the fluxes by which the great Lord separates the precious from the vile.

I desire to call your attention to the text by leading you to mark three things. First, I want you to watch *the attitude of the refiner*.—"And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver." Secondly, *the object of his refining*,—"He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." And, thirdly, *the result of the refinement*,—"That they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

I. Notice carefully **THE ATTITUDE OF THE REFINER**,—"He shall sit." The posture would not have been mentioned had it not been instructive.

Sitting looks like the attitude of indifference. There is the metal vexed with a white heat: here is the refiner sitting down. There is the child of God upon the bed of pain, and he cries, "My Lord, come and help me"; and there the refiner sits, looks on, but does not stir a hand. The child of God is sinking in trouble; he fears, like Peter, that the next step may drown him; and there is his Lord, calm and

unmoved. When the apostolic ship was out at sea, and tossed with tempest, Christ was asleep in the hinder part of the vessel. Unbelief dares challenge his love because of this apparent apathy: How can he sit still and see us suffer? She mutters—"He is indifferent: he does not care." "Carest thou not that we perish?" is the cry of unbelief; and before the heart actually utters it, it begins to think, "Where is the tenderness of Christ? Where is the gentleness of God? Am I thus to be tortured? Am I thus to be tried? Am I thus to be tossed from billow to billow without a helper?" Yet after all our crying and tears the refiner sits still! Yes, he to all appearance disregards our prayers and entreaties, and fulfils the description of the text—"He sits."

It is wonderful how often God seems utterly indifferent to his people, and how a Christ filled with compassion, because he has been tried in all points like as we are, yet seems to look down upon our sorrows with undisturbed serenity. I once heard a Welshman preach in his own native tongue. It was a sermon in which he got into the spirit of his subject, and spake as one inspired. He used a very simple illustration when he said, "The mother has her dear babe upon her knee. It is time for washing; she washes its face. The little one cries; it loves not the soap; it loves not the water; and therefore it cries. Here is a great sorrow! Listen to its lamentations! It is ready to break its heart! What does the mother do? Is she sorrowful? Does she weep? No; she is singing all the while, because she understands how good it is that the child should suffer a little temporary inconvenience in order that its face, all smeared and foul, should become bright and beautiful again. Thus does the great Father rest in his love, and rejoice over us with singing while we are sighing and crying." Ours is but a child's sorrow, sharp and shallow, of which the greatest source is our own ignorance of the great designs of the Perfecter of men. The Lord pities our childish sorrow, but he does not so regard it as to stay his hand from his cleansing work. "Let not thy soul spare for his crying," said Solomon; and our wise Father when he is chastening us does not spare us for our crying. What if the metal that is put into the furnace should be sentient when the crucible is hot, and should cry out, "Oh, take me out; the fire is too hot; I cannot bear it. I am dissolving; I am melting; take me out." Would the assayer regard the entreaties of the metal? Ah, no! The refiner sits still. Why should he be flurried? He knows what he is at, and he knows that his divine methods are wise and infallible. He is not hurting the silver, but doing it lasting service. He is not even putting it through a needless process. He is taking the shortest way of working when he seems to be longest in his assays. There is a haste that is not good speed, and God uses not such haste as that; he moves at the pace of perfection, and that may seem slow to petulance. He shall sit as a refiner till thou shalt say, "Does he care at all for me?"

Carnal reason may judge as it pleases as to the indifference of him who seems to sit at ease while his people are melted in the flames, but faith is full well assured that in the attitude of the divine Refiner there is *real attention*. Why does the refiner sit, but because he is resolved steadily to watch the crucible? He will not go away and leave it, even for a moment, lest the heat should grow too great or a certain point

should be passed over when his presence would be essential to the success of the process. I have often heard that a refiner sits and looks at the silver till he can see his own portrait in it; but, though I have heard that venerable story many times, and can see the evident moral of it, I have my suspicions as to its being a matter of fact. I certainly should not like to be the refiner who had such a task to do, for when a crucible is in the white heat of the furnace, it is almost enough to burn out your eyes to look at it even for an instant; and I do not believe that any human being could watch a mass of molten silver glowing in the furnace till he saw his own image there. Christ's eye can bear the blaze, and he can watch us in the fires. But I use not the illustration, because I have my doubts about the truth of it. Our Lord sits as the refiner at the furnace mouth, because he is all attention. He has, as it were, given up all other cares just to sit there, and watch his treasure. He is determined that his servants shall be purified—that the sons of Levi shall be purged; and so there he is, everything else laid aside, giving his whole heart and soul to those whom he is refining. "Oh," say you, "but you exaggerate if you talk about the Lord's giving all his heart and soul to one of his people." No, I do not. The Lord Jesus watches each one of his people as intently as if he had not another. Finite minds must have a centre somewhere, and as that centre changes so our circumference of thought and action shifts; but God's centre is everywhere, and his circumference is nowhere. Each one of us may be in the centre of the divine mind, and yet none of the redeemed may be any the less near because of it. Jesus watches each one—you, me, fifty thousand others—all of them his chosen ones that are undergoing the purifying process. He watches each one as if there were never another for his blessed eye to rest upon. He is all attention, watching not as children gaze on soldiers in the fire, but as practical refiners watch their precious metal. Poor, bowed heart, Jesus is all attention. His sitting down is not because he forgets, but because he remembers.

"God's furnace doth in Zion stand,
But Zion's God sits by,
As the refiner views his gold,
With an observant eye."

Always observing, always watching. Jesus shall sit,—“He shall sit as a refiner.”

But we may notice more than this. I think I see in the sitting down of the refiner a *settled patience*, as if he seemed to say, “This is stern work, and I will sit down to it, for it will need care, and time, and constant watchfulness. This metal may need to be purified in a furnace of earth seven times, but I am set upon the perfecting of the work, and, therefore, here I place myself. I shall bear with this man till I have delivered him from his faults. I shall bear with this woman till I have made something of her—till I have got away that which weakens and injures her character. I mean to bear with this poor, petulant, unbelieving, complaining, selfish, groaning mortal; he has some love to me, and some life in me; and, therefore, I will bear with him till his life and love shall have conquered all earthly grossness, and he shall be a lump of pure metal fit for my Father's treasury.”

The Lord has had boundless patience with some of us already, for we required a world of purifying, and we have been very slow to receive it. How many sermons have we heard, and yet how little have we been purified by the word? How often has the Spirit striven with us, and yet every thought is not yet brought into captivity. How often have we had near and true fellowship with Christ, and yet have again forsaken him! How frequently have we had to endure the furnace of affliction and yet our dross and tin are not removed. The Refiner still perseveres with settled resolve of ceaseless love. He will not give up his gracious task. He did not come hastily to the furnace door and shut us in, and then leave us while he minded other matters; but he has been sitting near his work ever since he began it, even as the refiner sits close to his work; and he means to stay as long as the work remains unfinished; he will not be gone till all is over. Here then faith sees divine attention and settled patience where unbelief dared to suspect unfeeling indifference.

I find in looking at the original that the word for "sit" is one which is used many times in Scripture for the posture of a king upon a throne: it is a sort of regal sitting down. So that we have here *the posture of power*. "He shall sit as a refiner," signifies, then, I take it, that he who seems indifferent, but who is constantly observant and patient, is seated on his throne possessing infinite power over all things, so that the process which he is watching can be checked or quickened according to his own will and wish. He reigns as a refiner, he has power over every coal, over every single jet of gassy flame, power over every breath of air that fans the fire, power over the furnace to its inmost centre and its utmost vehemence, power over the metal itself and its dross, and all that is excellent about it as well as all that is vile. Oh, this is a grand consolation! He that has undertaken to purify us can do it, for he sits on the throne of boundless might. Nothing short of an omnipotent Saviour could have saved *me*. It were ill news for me if men could show that Christ were not divine; for short of a divine Redeemer I shall never be perfected, I know. No strength but that which made me can new-make me. Only he that says, "I kill and I make alive," can ever kill my sin and make me alive unto God. Oh, Christian, this ought to be a delight to you, that he who sits as a refiner sits on the throne while he is refining you, and exercises sovereign grace and infinite power while dealing with your soul. Jesus reigns in the work of sanctification, having all things at his disposal, and he can and will perform that which he has begun.

"Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins;
The work that wisdom undertakes
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes."

Eternal power performs what everlasting love designs. So I conceive that the text may also teach us *the perfect perseverance of Christ* in the work of the purifying of his people. "He shall sit as a refiner." Might not your backsliding after you had once reached a great height of sanctity have disappointed Christ, and made him leave you? Yes,

if it were not true of him, "I am God: I change not," he would have left you to be consumed. But therefore ye are not consumed, because from his blessed purpose he will not swerve. Oh, how many times you and I have seemed to make advances towards purity, but have gone back again to folly, thus manifesting the abundance of our alloy. It did seem as if, at last, the blessed flame of grace had begun to make us bright; and yet we have dulled again back to the old state. But where is the Refiner? Has he gone? By no means. There he is! He has been sitting as a refiner, and he is sitting still. That is a blessed text: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." There is much to discourage him, but he is not discouraged; there is much to make him relinquish the work, but he determines not to fail in it. His mind is made up, and well it may be, for he has paid in bloody sweat and in his heart's blood the ransom price to purchase us, and he will never leave half effected what he has spent his life to achieve. What he has redeemed he will refine. Gethsemane and Calvary have bound the refiner to his task. He undertook a stupendous labour, and he went through with it till he shouted from the tree, "It is finished," and therefore we may rest assured that he will go on with the further portions of his great enterprise till, from his throne above, he will say, "It is finished," as he surveys every one of us, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,"—pure lumps of gold and silver, brought home by himself, without a speck of dross about us. Oh, blessed hope! where should we dare to indulge it but in the presence of an almighty Saviour, whose immutable oath has bound him to carry out the work of our perfection.

II. Now, dear brethren, suffer a few words upon THE GREAT OBJECT OF OUR LORD'S REFINING WORK. This point has come up all along. May the Spirit of God instruct us concerning it.

The great object of his refining is that he may deliver us from all evil, and make us perfect. Recollect, *the subjects of purifying are his own chosen ones*,—"He shall purify the sons of Levi." Levi was the tribe taken out of the rest for God's service. The Lord has a people whom he has set apart unto himself, and these he will purify. Do others think that he does them an injustice by this act of choice? Would they like to be purified? Then, depend upon it, he will not refuse it to them. Nay, the quibble lies in words, and has no truth in it. Men pretend to be angry with electing love, though they have no desire for it themselves. God's election is an election to holiness, and this is a thing which men in their heart of hearts do not desire. Sirs, if you do not wish for purification and holiness, wherefore should you quarrel with God that he gives it not to you? Yet unholy men rave at election to holiness, and call it partiality, and I know not what besides. Ye dogs in the manger, will ye always howl at God because he gives to his own sheep that which you will not care to have? If you wish for it, you may have it. Free is the gospel to every soul under heaven that desires it. The Lord proclaims, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely;" but if men turn their backs on heaven's ever-flowing fountain, shall they afterwards quarrel with the election of God because he causes some to come whom he makes willing in the day of his power. They may quarrel if they will; but high overhead rolls the dread thunder of that awful word, "He will have mercy on whom

he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion." God is sovereign in his gifts of grace, and does after his own mind. He refuses grace to none, but yet he will have a people of his own on whom his sanctifying work shall be wrought. "He shall purify the sons of Levi."

The refiner begins his work by discovering to his people their need of purity. What! purify the sons of Levi? Do they want it? Surely, Reuben, Manasseh, Gad—these might want purifying; but Levi opens and shuts the door of the house of God. It is a Levite that sacrifices, that enters within the veil. Does *he* require purifying? Ay, that he does. "He shall purify the sons of Levi,"—the best, the very best, the holiest—those that come near to God—the true silver and the real gold. He shall purify these. Brother, sister, have you a notion that you do not need purifying? Discard it, for if we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have closest fellowship with God, yet still we need the cleansing blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son," still "cleanseth us from all sin." Still we need the purging Spirit, or else there remains enough of evil about the man that is nearest heaven's gates to make a Judas Iscariot of him, if grace do not prevent. "He shall purify the sons of Levi": the pure shall be purified, the clean shall be yet further cleansed. Did you ever notice that the branch which feels most of the knife, and gets most of the pruning, is not the dead branch? Not that withered, crooked branch does the husbandman wound with the knife. No, the best branch, that bears most fruit, is most worthy of the gardener's visits and shall be most favoured with them. That ore which has the most gold in it, in proportion to the quartz, is the likeliest to get into the fire. He that has most of refinement is he on whom Christ will carry out his refining work. "He shall purify the sons of Levi."

Further, observe that he not only discovers to them their need of this purity, but he remedies their impurity. He shall actually purify them as gold and silver. The point is the thoroughness of it. This piece of wood which makes my pulpit, if it is defiled, it is dusted, and it is at once sufficiently cleansed. Your platters are washed: that is all. Your furniture may need beating, dusting, and many processes; but there is nothing thorough in them compared with the metaphor of the text,—“He shall purify them as gold and silver.” They must go into the fire. The purging that God gives his people is not the washing of the outside of the cup and platter, it is the cleansing of the soul, the heart—the purging of the inward parts of the man—a fiery purging. Fire does not merely go about the metal, but it penetrates, and passes right into it. The metal is hot; it is melted; it flows; the fire has dissolved the mass. We say in the hymn, “Refining fire, go through my heart;” and that is the nearest approximation of language: but fire does something more than go through the metal. It seems to get into the very essence and nature and character of the metal, and fuse it all, making it all feel its supreme force. The Lord's purification of his people in order to make them fit to be with him in heaven is a fire process, mysterious, inward, penetrating, consuming, transforming. His Spirit burns like fire. His word like fire goes through and through the soul. His holy fellowship causes us to say, “My heart melted while my

beloved spoke"; and his fiery trials, too, when blest by the Spirit, seem to melt the very being of the man.

This fire-process is intended to be thorough, that it may be abiding. If you get a piece of gold or silver, though it has been through the fire, it may grow dull again, but it cannot again become impure and alloyed. Silver will soon oxidize upon the surface, but for all that the bulk of the silver vessel is not injured at all: it remains pure silver after it has been through the fire. The work is done, and done thoroughly. The purifications of God will last throughout eternity. Have you ever reflected upon the fact that when Christ's refining work is done upon us there will never be any need for it again? Blessed be God, there is no purgatorial fire. We need not dread that we have yet to pass through purging flames in another world, for Jesus has well refined the sons of Levi and they are clean every whit. Believers are taken up to heaven at once as soon as they quit this world. If we were not thoroughly purified before we entered there, we should be under a strong temptation to pride. Only think of yourself with a palm branch, my brother! You fought very badly, too. You with a harp in your hand! Is there not a temptation to strike just one gentle string in praise of what you did or suffered? Say not that you could not be thus tempted. Why, an angel fell from heaven; the son of the morning, a greater being than you, could not stand amidst the glories of Paradise. Pride dragged Lucifer from heaven, and hurled him down to the darkest deeps. Oh, joy, joy, joy, the like shall never happen to you. You will never be proud in Paradise: you will never be discontented in heaven. Say you, "I should think not"? I do not know. If you could go to heaven as you are you would be. You would be sorry to think that there is no temple there, and no more sea; and a great many things might make you dissatisfied, but you will not be discontented, for you will be purified. You will not speak sharply to your neighbour in heaven; you will not think he sings too loudly, or is too demonstrative in his worship. You will not quarrel with anybody up in heaven, for you will have nothing in you which can lead to sin. See how splendidly the refiner will do his work, then, so that throughout eternity, when this poor world shall all dissolve in smoke, and the sun shall have burnt out like an expiring coal, and the moon shall be black as sackcloth of hair, and all earth-born things shall have grown hoary and given way to corruption's finger, you shall still be young and fresh and pure and perfect as the God that loved you, and that made you so. Oh, well may we be content to let the fire burn and let the coals glow as much as ever they will, since it can be only for a very little while, and then come the ages, the eternities, the God, the Christ, the heaven which he has prepared for us when we are prepared for them. This, then, is the object of his refining.

III. Thirdly, and to conclude, WHAT WILL BE THE IMMEDIATE RESULT OF THIS REFINING AS CHRIST CARRIES IT ON? It will be this—"That they may offer to the Lord an offering of righteousness."

First, these Levites shall attend to their business. They ought to have been working at the temple, but they had forgotten their high calling. The sons of Levi had taken up their portion in the world, though their God had never given them any, for he gave no portion to

Levi when the land was divided among the tribes. "The Lord's portion is his people," and the Lord is the portion of their inheritance. The Levites had got away from their spiritual calling, and had given themselves up to mind this and that; but it is pleasant to observe that when God purifies them, then they begin to do their own business,—“That they may offer to the Lord.” Oh, beloved, if you have been refined by the Word, if you have been refined by the Spirit, if you have been refined by heavenly joys, if you have been refined by sanctified sorrows, you wish to serve God much more than ever you did before. You now pray that if you have lived to self in any degree, you may be forgiven, for you wish to live to Christ, and to him alone. Now, as a Levite, you say, “What can I do for God? There is nothing here worth living for, but to love and serve him. Here, Lord, tell me what thou wouldest have me to do. I desire to do it at once.” Brother, thank God for every trial you have suffered, if it leads you to offer your sacrifice. I will bless God for all I have endured myself, if I am enabled to fulfil my priesthood; for are we not a nation of priests, a peculiar people, set apart to offer sacrifice to God? And this is to be the result of refinement: that we do good work and service unto God. Some of you want a little pushing on in this direction, for I know a great many Christians who live as if the main point in religion was to enjoy yourself. “I enjoyed that sermon. I enjoyed that prayer-meeting.” Yes, that is quite right. But have you done anything? Have you served the Master? Have you offered anything to Jesus? Have you brought forth fruit to his glory? Oh, it is a good thing to be watered; it is a blessed thing to stand in the warm sunlight and grow; but after the watering and the sunshine must come the fruit-bearing, or we shall be barren fig trees after all. And so it is in the text, you see—“That they may offer unto the Lord an offering.”

But then, next, they are not only to do their work, but they are to do it well. “They must offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness,” for, oh, we may do much for God that looks very pretty, but when we get into trial and look back upon our service by the furnace light we do not think much of it. Have you ever taken a little time to look back upon your service of God, and have you not wondered at yourself that you have done it so badly? Have you not said, “Please God I may address that class again, I will be more passionately in earnest”? Have you not said, “Please God I may get out to that village to preach again, I will speak with all my soul, and nothing else but Christ shall be my theme”? Have we not often wished we could do our life-work over again, that we might do it better? I do not think that there is any use in that wish. Let us improve what is to be done in the future, rather than wish to undo the past. Let us buckle on our harness, and ask God to give us more spiritual intensity, that what is done may be a sacrifice offered in righteousness unto the Lord.

And then another result of this purification is that they were accepted, for the next verse says, “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord as in the days of old.” When God accepts our persons, he accepts our offerings, but if we are not ourselves accepted, then that which we do is rejected. When the Lord Jesus Christ enables us to live by faith in him, and to see that we are

“accepted in the Beloved,” and when that faith helps us to work in a right spirit and serve God from a pure motive, then we ourselves and our work are pleasant unto God as in former days.

God grant that the blessed processes of his providence and of his grace which are being carried on in his people may be carried on in you and me, that we may serve God with perfect hearts all our days.

I think I heard somebody say, “I do not want putting through that process. I do not wish for such purifying.” You have seen the great masses of slag that they throw out from the furnace. They lie in great heaps at the pit’s mouth. Will these be a picture of you and your eternal condition? Reprobate silver shall men call them, because God has rejected them. Will you be the slag cast away? the dross left for ever? Oh, eternity, eternity, what must it be to be shipwrecked on thy shoreless sea, and drifted for ever as a waif and stray from God and hope? Eternity, eternity, what must it be to be rejected and cast away from the presence of God and from the glory of his power, thrown out upon the waste-heap of the universe, for ever given up? God save any man from that! Oh, it were worth wading through a thousand hells to obtain that which makes existence worth the having—namely, rightness with God. But, oh, if there were nothing else to lose but God’s love, nothing else to earn by neglect of things divine but to be rejected of God, I would plead with you with my whole soul that you should seek the Lord now. Cry mightily to the divine Saviour that he may now purge you with his precious blood from all the guilt of sin, that he may then go on with the second process by which he shall purge you from the power and habit and defilement of sin, and make you, like himself, immaculate before the Omniscient. God grant it, for Jesus’s sake. Amen.

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.”—Revelation xxiii. 3.

We shall take these words as referring to heaven. Certainly it is most true of the celestial city, as well as of the millennial city, that the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it. This theme of surpassing interest intimately concerns all of us who are believers: for to the rest eternal at the foot of the throne we are constantly looking. Were it otherwise, I fear there would be little prospect of our ever passing the heavenly portals. We do not suppose that a man is shooting at a target if he does not look that way; nor can we imagine that a man's ambition is fixed on heaven if he has no heavenward thoughts or aspirations. The pilgrim turns his steps towards the place he is desirous to reach. What though he cannot catch a glimpse of the distant spot which is the goal of his hope, yet his eyes are in that direction. Let him climb a hill on a clear day, and you will see how he strains his eyeballs to catch a glimpse of tower or spire, minaret or battlement, of the city he is seeking. When he descends the valley, and the outlook is dreary, he solaces his soul with songs in the night that tell of “a day's march nearer home.” The anticipated greetings of friends gladden his heart. After a noble fashion the prospect of heaven lights up our sad days with gleams of glory; while our happy Sabbaths here below have often made us long for the sanctuary on high. In the crowded courts of this Tabernacle our fancy has pictured the Temple above of living stones and countless worshippers. Bunyan speaks of Mount Clear from which with aid of telescope the celestial city might be descried in the distance. We have enjoyed intervals when no clouds or mists have obstructed our outlook, and these have usually come to us on the Lord's days. A friend of mine when he went to reside in Newcastle-on-Tyne was looking over a newly-built house that was to let; and as he looked out of the window in the top room, the landlord said to him, “You can see Durham cathedral from here on a Sunday.” My friend, failing at first to catch his meaning, said, “Why on Sunday more than any other day?” “Well,” said he, “the furnaces are not going, and the smoke is not rising to darken the
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atmosphere." I was not surprised to hear that the passing incident supplied my friend with a parable the next time that he preached. On special Sabbaths we peer into the city of which our text says, "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." God grant that our meditations may stir your upward longings, and that our discourse may excite your desires towards heaven.

Come, then, let us think upon the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and of the place where it is. But stop a moment; I want you to look round and take a preliminary survey of the scene. Do you notice that this throne is the "throne of God *and of the Lamb*"? Doubtless you know where John got that phrase, that title for Christ—"the Lamb." It is almost peculiar to himself. You catch the note in Isaiah; Jesus is celebrated as a lamb in his prophecies. You hear the name in an epistle of Peter, and in the Acts of the Apostles as a quotation from the evangelical prophet. But with John it is a most familiar term. John, the best beloved of all the disciples of Jesus, loves this sweet symbol, and delights to speak of his Lord as "the Lamb." This John had been a disciple of that other John, the Baptist, whose chief and choicest sermon, which lingered most in his mind and memory, was couched in words like these—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John the Baptist struck a note which vibrated throughout the whole life of John the Divine. In Patmos John recalls his early impressions, for old men delight in the scenes and sayings of their youth.

When John began his gospel, he was absorbed in "*the Word*;" now that he unfolds the wondrous scroll of vision he portrays "*the Lamb*." As the key-note of Redemption the name recurs frequently in his writings, and in his closing book the name comes back to him with all its music, and he dwells upon it with evident delight. The word "*agnion*," as used in the book of Revelation, might be translated "a little lamb." It is a diminutive in the Greek text, expressive, as Dean Woodhouse observes, of tenderness and love; and in such sense our Saviour himself used it in addressing Peter, after his resurrection—"Lovest thou me? feed my lambkins." I refer to the idiom without any wish to see the common rendering altered; but it seems to show a marvellous degree of familiarity in John's mind with his blessed Master, when he looks upon him as the little lamb to be loved, for you know how wont we are to express affection in diminutive terms. "My little dear," or "my little darling," are expressions that trip sweetly from our tongues. On the other hand, were we to say, "my dear big daughter," or "my dear tall son," the words would sound awkwardly. We naturally give diminutive names to our favourites. Thus you will observe, dear friends, that while our divine Lord has names of infinite majesty which appeal to our loftiest homage, he has also names of pure simplicity, like "the holy child Jesus" and "the little lamb," when he appears to us innocent as a babe, or suffering as a sacrifice.

I. The sublime adoration of the heavenly host is offered to the Lamb that was slain and hath redeemed us to God by his blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation. In order to behold the throne of God, and of the Lamb, you must first of all get a sight of the Lamb. I invite you, therefore, in the words of John the Baptist, to "BEHOLD THE LAMB of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look at him in

the dawn of his ministry, when first he comes within the range of mortal vision—a man, a lowly man, one chosen out of the people. About him there is neither form nor comeliness to make him at all remarkable; he is one who did not strive, or cry, or cause his voice to be heard in the streets; not a pretentious, nor an ambitious man, but one who could say of himself, and nobody could gainsay it, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” He was born in Bethlehem; he grew and waxed strong in spirit; he increased in wisdom and stature. I suppose that when he was a child he spake as a child, understood as a child, and thought as a child: I know that he abode with his parents, and was subject to them. In his mature years, when he was manifested to Israel, we behold him, the sinless One, endowed with the common faculties and afflicted with the common infirmities of our mortal race. He suffered the breath of slander, he wept with mourners; he groaned beneath the burden of care, and smarted under the pangs of pain. He lived and he died in the presence of many witnesses: what further evidence could be desired that Jesus was a man and not a myth, a lamb-like man, and none of your pretenders to greatness?

His character, too, is so purely natural that the example of excellence he sets needs no explanation. The gentle disposition that drew little children around him, the kindly temper that bore reviling without anger, the love he showed to the poor and destitute, the respect he paid to the outcasts of society, and above all his kindly notice of publicans and harlots, as sheep gone astray who were capable of being restored, claim our gratitude, and cause us to regard him as the model of goodness for all generations. Such is the man whom all the kindreds of this earth must ultimately acknowledge as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” How lamb-like he is!

Thus you see the Lamb of God among men: will you track his footsteps still farther on till he becomes the Lamb of sacrifice, and actually takes the sin of man upon himself, that he may bear its penalty? What an extraordinary night that was when he rose up from the supper table and said to his disciples, “Let us go hence.” He went to a certain garden where he had been accustomed to spend nights in meditation; he went there to pray. And oh, what a prayer it was; such surely as heaven never heard before nor since. In an agony he prayed more earnestly, and yet more earnestly, till “he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground.” He cried to the Father, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” Then did the heavy cloud of human sins overshadow his soul, and the ghastly terrors of all his people’s guilt brood over his spirit. He proved the hour of dread and the power of darkness. Arrested by one who had eaten bread with him, he was betrayed into the hands of conspirators. By an apostle who turned apostate he was sold for a few paltry pieces of silver. From the place of private retreat, and of secret prayer, he was hurried off to prison and to judgment. Before Herod and Caiaphas, and then before Pontius Pilate, was he arraigned. All through the night he was falsely accused and foully mocked, scourged, spit upon, and treated with the utmost contempt. So was his heart broken within him because of the reproaches of them that reproached God which fell upon him. Deserted by his disciples, denounced by the priests, despised by the populace, he was at length delivered up to the malice of his foes, and, sentenced by

Pilate, he was led away to be crucified: still his patience was conspicuous, and when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter he opened not his mouth.

Now you shall see the full weight of sin pressing upon "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Every morning and every evening there had been a lamb sacrificed in the tabernacle as the type and emblem of this Lamb of God who was yet to come. A pretty little innocent lamb that a child might fondle was brought up to the priest, and its warm blood was made to flow in pain, and it was offered as a sacrifice upon the altar. But now *he* comes—the last of all lambs, the first too—the real lamb, the Lamb of God, of which the others were but types. Him they took, silent, passive, submissive, and nailed him to a cross. There he hung in the glare of the sun till the torture of tender nerves in his hands and feet produced such fever in his flesh that he said, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Such was the dissolution of his entire frame it seemed as if he had no longer a solid body: it was melted with bitter pain. There he hung, men jeering him, till at last the sun could bear the sight no longer, and veiled his face; the earth could no more endure to be the stage for such a tragedy, and began to rock and reel; the very dead were stirred as though they could not slumber in their graves while such a deed was done, so tombs were opened and many arose. Oh, it was a wondrous spectacle. Those that saw it smote upon their breasts, and went upon their way. It was the Son of God "bearing, that we might never bear, his Father's righteous ire."

Behold him, bruised between the upper and nether millstones of divine justice in thy stead and mine, that God, without the violation of his holy law, might turn to us in infinite mercy and blot out our transgressions and quench the devouring fire of his wrath. Say, then, beloved, have you ever seen this sight? Have you so seen it as to sing with our poet—

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there" ?

Do you trust him? Are you believing him? His cry from the cross is "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Have you so looked? If so, then you have had the preliminary sight: and I pray God so to strengthen the eyes of your understanding that you may gaze more intently on this vision of the Apocalypse—"The throne of God and of the Lamb."

II. BEHOLD THE THRONE. Let us see it first from the Lamb's side of it. Of course there is only one throne: God and the Lamb are not divided. The Lamb is God, and the interests of God and the Lamb are one. The one kingdom of God, even the Father, is identical with the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Acknowledging the oneness of the throne, we proceed to inspect it from the point of view in which the Lamb chiefly challenges our notice. You will remember that he is portrayed to us as "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." So John beheld him, as you read in the fifth chapter of the Revelation and

sixth verse. But I would not have you make any mistake about the meaning of that phrase. Dr. Watts constructed a poor paraphrase of the passage when he said—

“ Our Jesus fills the middle seat
Of the celestial throne.”

There is no such idea in Holy Scripture. The midst of the throne means the front of the throne, according to the Greek. The Lamb was not on the throne in that vision, but standing immediately before it. That is a position in which our Lord Jesus Christ would have us see him. I will show you presently that he is *on* the throne according to our text, but not according to the passage which I have just now quoted. In the previous narrative of the fifth chapter, where the Lamb is said to be in the midst of the throne, means in the front of it, in the centre, standing there that we might draw near and approach the throne through him. To the awful throne of God there could be no access except through a Mediator; he stands therefore in the front of the throne between us and the invisible, sovereign God, an interposer and interpreter, one of a thousand, the daysman who can lay his hand upon both. This is a beautiful thought. Jesus, according to the former vision of this revelation, is in the front of the throne where God always sees him before he sees us. I cannot endure the sight of God until I see him in Christ; and God cannot bear the sight of me till he sees me in Christ. Wonderful is that text in the book of Exodus, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” He does not say, “When you Israelites see the blood I will pass over you.” Why, they were not in a position to see it; for they were inside the house, and the blood was outside, on the lintel and on the two side-posts. It is true, they had seen the Lamb as it was slain, for you remember that the whole assembly of the congregation was to kill it between the two evenings; and they also saw the sprinkling of the blood: but their safety did not depend so much upon their having seen it as upon God’s continually seeing it,—“When I see the blood I will pass over you.” In like manner the covenant security of the saints arises rather from God the Father looking to his Son Jesus Christ as their surety and sacrifice, than from the constant exercise of their faith. Hence we rightly plead in our hymn:—

“ Him and then the sinner see :
Look through Jesu’s wounds on me.”

There, then, our Lord Jesus stands in front of the throne interceding for us, interposing for us, opening the way for us to approach to God, even the Father.

I have drawn your attention to this previous vision as a preliminary to that of our text, in which the position of Jesus Christ is upon the throne reigning there, clothed bodily with all the power of the Godhead. Do not forget that it is even so. The Lamb is on the throne. Co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, very God he is, very God he always was. We do not forget the glory which he had with the Father or ever the earth was, but it is as God-man Mediator that he is now, in his complex person, invested with heavenly honours.

"This is the Man, th' exalted Man,
 Whom we unseen adore.
 But when our eyes behold his face,
 Our hearts shall love him more."

The full glory of his Person as Son of God and Son of man shall be manifested when he shall be beheld upon the throne of God. He who once appeared as the sacrificed and slaughtered Lamb shall reign with supreme authority; the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. It is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The power thus conferred upon him the Lamb not only possesses by right and title, but he exercises it in deed and in truth. "All power," said our risen Redeemer, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He ruleth now with unlimited sway: and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre. As Joseph was exalted in Egypt, and Pharaoh said, "See, I have set thee over all the land; and the people cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt": even so we read of Jesus, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in the glory of God the Father." The rebellious are not exempted from his rule. What though they conspire against him, they shall be utterly confounded. One might fancy that there was a slight strain of language in Pharaoh's fiat, that "without Joseph no man shall lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt"; but there is no exaggeration if we apply the words to Christ, for it is a fact that every man living is responsible to Jesus for the thoughts and imaginations of his heart. He is King for ever. The throne of heaven is the throne of God and of the Lamb. His dominion over nature always appears to me a delightful contemplation. I like to think of the sea roaring and the floods clapping their hands in his praise. He it is who makes the fields joyful and the trees of the forest glad. His pencil paints the varied hues of the flowers, and his breath perfumes them. Every cloud floats o'er the sky wafted by the breath of his mouth. Lord of all the realms of life and death, his providence runs without knot or break through all the tangled skeins of time. All events, obvious or obscure, great or small, are subject to his influence, and fostered or frustrated by his supremacy. The Lord reigneth, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

Thy royal prerogative, O Lamb of God, extends over all the realms of grace. Thou, O Lord Jesus, dost dispense mercy as seemeth good in thy sight. As the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickens whom he will, even so he has given to the Son to have life in himself, and to quicken whomsoever he pleases. As head of the church, his benign control is absolute amongst the members of his body. In the bestowment of spiritual gifts, and in the appointment to sacred offices, he rules and regulates, and nothing is too minute to escape his notice. How pleasant to my poor heart to think that he who bowed his head to shame is now exalted, as God over all, to such a seat of honour. I feel that no odium I could incur, no injury I could sustain in preaching his name and publishing his fame, could be of any account in comparison with my joy in seeing him exalted. Let me starve in a garret or die in a ditch if

only Christ be glorified. The old soldiers of Napoleon, rank and file, revelled in the triumphs of their general. When they fell on the battlefield, with shouts of victory ringing in the air, they seemed to think light of death so long as the emperor had won renown, and the eagles of France were in the ascendant. Live for ever, royal Lamb! Reign for ever, victorious Lord! As for us, who or what are we? Brethren, let us follow him in the tribulation of the hour while the fight is fierce, so shall we find ourselves in his train when his triumph is trumpeted forth before the assembled universe. "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

What lowly reverence we owe to him who occupies such a throne of boundless empire! Approach him then with profound humility; but mingle therewith the most childlike confidence. Beloved, we see before us the grandeur of God and the gentleness of a Lamb. The infinite Creator and the innocent creature are linked together in lovely union. He who is God over all, blessed for ever, has resources amply sufficient to meet your utmost wants. You do not come to a finite helper when you draw near to Christ. In trusting to the merit of his blood, you have an all-prevalent plea and full security for pardon, peace, and acceptance. You come to the throne of the Lamb, and that throne of the Lamb is the throne of God. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." There is no stinted provision in such a treasury. All the riches of the glory of God are treasured up in Christ Jesus, and Christ has all this wealth to bestow it all upon his redeemed family. I do not know what hope and expectations the Socinian can cherish with a Man-Christ, or an Angel-Christ, or a semi-divine Christ, as a guide to immortality. They may honour Jesus of Nazareth for the purity of the life he lived on earth, but I want God in human flesh to save my soul, the death of the Son of God to wash away my sin. I find the fight of life so fierce that no right hand but that which made the heavens can ever give me the victory. I stay myself on the incarnate God who bled and died, and is gone into the excellent glory, and sits down there upon the throne, Lord over all: I trust his saving strength to bear me through. Let me challenge you, my hearers. Are you trusting him and staying yourselves only and wholly upon him? Could you be content with any one less than a divine Saviour? If you are born from above you could not. Magnify his name then, and worship him in the quiet of your hearts at this good hour.

Well, that is the aspect of the throne from the side of the Lamb. Let us now take another look and behold *the throne of God*. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. The throne of God, if we view it as sinners, with a sense of guilt upon our conscience, is an object of terror, a place to fly from. Our poet was right when he said—

"Once 'twas a seat of burning wrath,
And shot devouring flame:
Our God appeared, consuming fire
And vengeance was his name."

I recollect when I had such terrible apprehensions of God, and I know that they were founded upon truth, for the Lord is terrible to unforgiven

men. Now I do not disdain, as some do, to sing "Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." Not that there has been a change in God. It is the view of God which the sinner is able to take which has been changed, and that change has been effected by Christ. From everlasting to everlasting Jehovah is the same: in him there is no variableness. Jesus did not die to make the Father love us, or to melt his aversion into affection. Nay, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he loved us with an eternal love and chose us in the person of Christ before the foundation of the world. Still his justice was outraged by the transgressions we committed: and as a holy and just Sovereign his anger was kindled against us as sinners; and that anger was no less justly appeased by the death of Christ, when he put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself. By his precious blood a full atonement was made. Henceforth, eternal praises to his name, the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb. It is a throne of righteousness, but no less a throne of grace. There, on the throne of the Almighty, mercy reigns. According to the merit of the sacrifice and the virtue of the atonement all the statutes and decrees of the kingdom of heaven are issued. The altar and the throne have become identical. From that throne no fiery bolt can ever again be hurled against the believer, for it is the throne of the Lamb as well as the throne of God. Oh, what comfort there is for suffering saints in this conjunction of majesty and mercy on the throne of the Highest.

The sovereignty that is signified by this throne must certainly be unlimited. The throne of God is the throne of an absolute monarch who doeth as he wills among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of this lower world. From that throne the proclamation comes like a peal of thunder, "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble." God's throne of sovereignty is not a throne of arbitrary power, for the Lord is perfect and holy, and his will is just and right. In acting according to the purpose of his own will he abounds towards us in all wisdom and goodness. The sternness of law is linked with the sweetness of love; because while the throne of heaven is the throne of God, it is still the throne of the Lamb. I fear that I fail to find the words that will express my thoughts; but this empire of God and the Lamb endears itself to our hearts. There is about it a kingly kindliness, and a majestic mercy most charming to the mind. Do any ask, What throne is that? To whom does it belong? We answer,—it is the throne of the great and glorious God, and it is the throne of the lowly lovely Lamb. The glorious Lord is gentle as a child; the lamb is lordly as a lion. Referring to the Book sealed with seven seals, described in the fifth chapter, St. Bernard said, "John heard of a lion and saw a lamb; the lamb opened the book and appeared a lion." But, behold, here it is, "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Put off thy shoes from thy feet, O seer; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground, for God is here. Come, little children, there is charm enough to entice you; for the Lamb is here. It is the throne of God, therefore fall down before it with awe and self-abasement; but it is the throne of the Lamb, and therefore you may stand up before it without fear. Does not a rich blend of splendour and tenderness dawn on your apprehension? Are you not sensible of some present effect on

your souls? Do you not feel the charming sweetness and the overpowering light? John tells us in the first chapter what his own sensations were, when the Son of man appeared to him in the midst of the seven candlesticks, vested with the insignia of Priest and King. First, he says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." Then he adds, "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am"—Ah! when you recognize who he is, fear gives place to faith, and trust succeeds to trembling. Be of good courage, then, ye faint and timid disciples. Why do ye come creeping with bated breath to the throne of heavenly grace? Will ye always cry in the same strain, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners"? Such ye were, but ye are not so now. You are washed in the blood of the Lamb. You are his dear children. You have received the spirit of adoption. When ye pray, say, "Our Father which art in heaven." Let it be your pleasure, as it is your privilege, to hold nearer intercourse with God than Israel did, for no bounds are set about the mount. They had to stand at a distance; they dared not draw near lest they should die; they did even entreat that the terrible words might not be spoken to them any more; but you are a people near to him and dear to him, and the throne to which you owe allegiance is the throne of God and of the Lamb.

I am painfully conscious, as I proceed, that the subject is too much beyond my grasp to mould it into a sermon. This is not preaching. I have been merely holding up the text, and trying to suggest thought after thought, as the glory of my Lord's kingdom occurred to my mind. But what can any of us say in the presence of God and of the Lamb? Our proper position is to fall down upon our faces and worship. Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: pure and sinless as they were, their homage was lowly and obsequious. Each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he fly. In the presence of the Eternal, language fails us except the one adoring cry, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory." The only other exclamation appropriate to utter would be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing."

One fact remains to be noticed—it is this: the throne of God and of the Lamb is in heaven. **BEHOLD THEN THE THRONE IN HEAVEN.** We must pass beyond this earthly region, and join the company of those who people the celestial realm before we can see the throne of God, so as to obtain a complete view of it. Is not this among the chief joys of heaven?

"I'd part with all the joys of sense,
To gaze upon thy throne.
Pleasures spring fresh for ever thence,
Unspeaking, unknown."

There are many ideas of heaven, and I suppose, according to each man's character, will be the prospects he cherishes, and the answer he gives when the question is asked—"What must it be to be there?" There is ample scope for imagination, so abundant are the joys which the Lord hath prepared for them that love him. There is the great wall, with

its twelve glittering foundations, and there are the twelve gates, and the twelve several pearls; there, too, is the tree of life, with its twelve manners of fruits. Who shall ever tell forth all the meaning of the symbols used by holy men to set forth the Paradise of God?

Nor are the Scriptures our only source of information, for our sighs below are prophecies of the blessings laid up for us. The toil-worn labourer thinks of heaven as a land of rest, and he shall find it so. On the other hand, the relish that we have for religious worship, and the delight we take in Christian work, leads us to think of heaven as a sanctuary where the servants of God can serve him day and night: we shall find it so. For my part, I sympathize with both expectations; for though they sound contrary, they need not clash. The rest of glorified spirits, so far from being a sort of suspended animation, will rather consist of a joyous refreshment in enthusiastic service; and the ministry of ransomed hosts, instead of wearying them, will arouse them to fly more swiftly, to sing more loudly, and to serve God more diligently as they see his face. Are there not tempted ones among you who smile as they think that there shall be no sin in heaven? To Paul, when in prison, knowing that the hour of his departure was at hand, after a life of preaching the word and enduring persecution, the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge should give him was just then the most welcome anticipation. As the warriors look for a crown, so on the other hand friends look for communion. To loving hearts great is the bliss of heaven's unbroken fellowship of saints: it will indeed be a great joy in heaven to see all who loved the Lord below. How happy we shall be when these blessed reunions take place. Still, I think that all of you will agree with me that the heaven of heaven is that we shall be "with Christ, which is far better"—that we shall behold his face and partake of his glory. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be the centre of our delights. To have reached home in the heavenly Father's house, to have seen our Elder-brother, and to be sure that we shall abide with him and go no more out: oh, that is what we pant for! We long to hear his voice welcoming us to our new abode.

"Come in, thou blessed, sit by me;
 With my own life I ransomed thee;
 Come, taste my perfect favour:
 Come in, thou happy spirit, come;
 Thou now shalt dwell with me at home;
 Ye blissful mansions, make him room,
 For he must stay for ever."

Beloved, our song will be to him who loved us; and yet we shall want to tell out to others our love to him. You cannot wash his feet with your tears, because he will wipe all your tears away; you cannot honour him with your substance there as you can here, for there will be no widows and orphans whom you can relieve, no poor and needy ones whom you can feed and clothe and visit, doing to his disciples as you would do unto him. But oh, to fall before him, and then to gaze upon him! He looks like a lamb that has been slain, and wears his priesthood still. Oh, for a sight of him! One said, "See Naples and die." But oh, if we could only see Christ, even on earth for a minute, we would be content to die

and go home with him straightway ; nor ask leave first to go and bid them farewell which are at our house.

What hallowed communion with him we shall there enjoy. In his church below he has given us some pleasant foretaste of his sweet converse ; but there the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall always feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water. There is a text that I have been turning over in my mind for many years. I want to preach from it, but I cannot understand it clearly enough at present. I hope to preach from it one day before I go to heaven. If not, I will preach from it up there when I shall have realized its full significance. Ah ! do not smile. Some opportunities we shall have in heaven to testify of Christ ; for we shall make known unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. It is difficult to imagine that we ever can be able to explore the whole of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The passage I am referring to is that in which Jesus says, "In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Like Thomas, I am prone to ask questions. What is there to be prepared, and in what respect does heaven as a place need to be made ready ? I do not like to think of heaven as a half-built habitation, or as fully built, yet only partly furnished. What means this preparing of a place for us ? Perhaps our Lord's going there made heaven ready, and its mansions meet for the occupation of his disciples. Heaven would hardly be a home for saints in the absence of the Saviour. As I do not know the angels, and never was acquainted with any one of them, I doubt very much whether I should feel at home in their company if Jesus were not there too. There are a few saints up yonder whom I once knew and dearly loved. But one wants to be introduced to the whole of the residents, to the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven. How can this happy familiarity be brought about ? Now that Jesus is there we have a friend on high whom we have known, and who has known us, who can introduce us to all its inhabitants and acquaint us with all its joys. His presence is the light and the glory of the celestial city. My place will be prepared when I am safe in his arms, leaning on his gentle breast. There may be much work for the builder before all the plans and purposes of the eternal Architect are completed. Of that I do not know : of that, therefore, I cannot speak. Jesus has gone to prepare a place for his people ; and we very distinctly perceive that he is preparing his people for the place.

Listen ye now ; lend me your ears, and hearken to this concluding word that I have to say to you. Heavenward now we are hastening our steps. We long to reach the happy plains, because there is not only a rest to be enjoyed, but a festival to be celebrated. The marriage-supper of the Lamb draweth nigh. His church shall be prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. We that are with him, following in his train, called, chosen, and faithful, are only espoused to him as yet, but we are going to that place where the voice shall be heard, "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his bride hath made herself ready." I halt. I dare not advance a step farther. I bring you to the margin of this blessed ocean of infinite delight. Oh, for a plunge into it—into the Godhead's deepest sea of love. Is there a more intimate relation into which our Lord Jesus

Christ shall hereafter take his beloved people whereby we shall be forever united to him? Shall we know the fulness of his love in a communion of which it were not lawful for a man to speak? Was this one of the unspeakable words which Paul heard when he was caught up into Paradise? Can it be that this marriage scene is the last act of the new creation, as it was of the old creation, when the Lord God found and formed a helpmeet for Adam? "This is a great mystery. I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Till the day break and the shadows flee away, let us wait for the Bridegroom's appearing, and the home-bringing of the bride. As virgins that look forward to the marriage day let us keep our lamps trimmed, and see to it that there is oil in our vessels, lest when the cry is heard, "The Bridegroom cometh" any of us should need to nurse the dimly-burning spark, or despairingly cry, "Our lamps are gone out." Let us all be ready that we may go in through the gates into the city.

Some of you, alas! are not able to feel the joy which this subject excites in our breasts. You cannot take delight in the throne of God and of the Lamb. God grant you may. Come, now, to the throne of grace with open confession and secret contrition. It is the throne of God, who knows the nature of your sin; it is the throne of the Lamb, who bore the penalty of sin, and can put it away. Come to the throne of the Lamb that was slain. I entreat you to come now. So shall you find peace and reconciliation, and you shall be made meet to enter into the joy of your Lord. I pray God to bless this whole congregation, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation vii.

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SIN SUBDUED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He will subdue our iniquities.”—Micah vii. 19.

BUT lately I tuned my harp to the music of forgiven sin, and we sang of pardon bought with blood, finding our key-note in the words of David,—“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” It was a sweet subject to all our hearts, for we all have a portion in it, seeing we are all sinful, and have need to be forgiven: therefore did our souls dance to the high-sounding cymbals as we rejoiced in the complete pardon which our gracious God has given to all who believe in Jesus. But, beloved, the pardon of sin is not enough for us: we have another equally urgent need. If the Lord would forgive us all our sin we could not be happy with that alone. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities” is not perfect music till we add to it the next note, “who healeth all thy diseases.” We feel that we have within us a tendency to sin, and that tendency is our misery: from this tendency we must be emancipated, or we are no more free than the captive who has had the manacles removed from one wrist but feels the iron eating into the other arm. We wish to be delivered from every propensity to sin: ay, to be rescued altogether from its power. God has now given us a new life, and this will never be easy till the last link of the chain of sin is utterly removed. Since our new birth there remains no rest for us short of being perfectly like our God in righteousness and true holiness. The heavenly seed within us must and will grow, and as it increases in the soul it will expel the power of evil, for it cannot endure the least particle of it. We may now be called “the Irreconcilables,” for we can never be at peace with evil. We cannot tolerate sin. The thought of it pains us; and when we fall into a sinful act we are cut to the quick. We thirst to be pure, we pant to be holy, and we shall never be satisfied until we are perfectly so.

We, dear friends, who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit, find that we are by nature under the power of sin. It will not be an easy thing for us to escape from the terrible tyranny of sin; not without the putting forth of great power can the iron yoke be broken. What little experience we have had in the divine life leads us to see that there is an immense difficulty before us, making our upward progress one of

No. 1,577.

conflict and labour. A dreadful power has our nature in subjection, and that power cannot easily be overcome. Ever since the Fall sin has taken possession of us. This flesh of ours lusteth to evil : the propensities of our nature which are not in themselves sinful are made by our depraved hearts to be the occasions of concupiscence and transgression. We cannot eat, or drink, or talk, or sleep, but what there is a tendency to sin in each of these conditions. Out of the simplest movements of our being evil can arise. Actions which are incidental to the very fact that we are men—actions which are neither morally good nor morally evil—yet nevertheless become the nests in which sin lays its eggs and hatches them, so that every propensity of ours, even that which is in itself natural and fitting, readily becomes polluted and depraved through the indwelling of sin in our nature. Sin poisons the well-head. Sin is in our brain; we think wrongly. Sin is in our heart; we love that which is evil. Sin bribes the judgment, intoxicates the will, and perverts the memory. We recollect a bad word when we forget a holy sentence. Like a sea which comes up and floods a continent, penetrating every valley, deluging every plain, and invading every mountain, so has sin penetrated our entire nature. How shall this flood be assuaged? This enemy so universally dominant, so strongly entrenched, how shall he be dislodged? It has to be driven out somehow, every particle of it, and we shall never rest until it is; but by whom shall iniquity be subdued? How satisfactory the assurance of our text, "He will subdue our iniquities."

We find that our inward enemies are assisted by allies from without. The world which lieth in the wicked one is ever ready to assist his dominion within us. We cannot walk down a street but we hear language which pollutes us; we can scarcely transact business in our own counting-houses without being tempted. If we stay at home there is temptation there, and if we go abroad it is the same. The most retired are not free from sin, nay, their very retirement may only be a sinful selfishness which shirks imperative duty. We cannot do good to others without running some risk ourselves, and if we cease from godly endeavours because we would not hazard our own spiritual comfort, we are already taken in the snare. We cannot mix in politics in any degree, with the purest desire for our country's welfare, without breathing a tainted air; we cannot try to curb the social evil but we feel that we are on treacherous ground: yet we may not flinch from duty because of its perils. We shrink like the sensitive plant that is touched by the finger; we fold and furl up all the feelings of our being, because of the sin which touches us when we mingle with men. We often close up all the gates and windows of the soul because we are conscious that the enemies without are calling to the enemies within, and saying, "We will conquer him yet." Moreover, that mysterious spirit, the devil, is always ready to excite our flesh, and to urge on the world. I have heard that some people doubt his existence. Very likely they are so friendly to him that they would not like to betray him, and so they deny that he hides in their hearts; but those who are his enemies do not try to conceal him, but own with sad humiliation of heart that they are very conscious of his power. A wind from him will come sweeping through our spirit in the calmest hour of devotion, and in a

minute we are disturbed and distracted. We have had our thoughts all going up towards heaven, and in a moment it has seemed as if they were all sucked down into the bottomless pit, merely because that evil spirit has spread his dragon wing mysteriously over us, and created a horrible down-draught which our poor brain could not at once resist.

We have to fight, then, not only with sin, but with the flesh, which, like a Gibeonite, has become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the devil: we have to fight with the world which "lieth in the wicked one," steeped up to the throat in sin; and we have to fight with Satan himself. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood," or else we would gird on the sword, and go in for knocks and blows, and cuts and thrusts, and have the battle out; but we wrestle with "principalities and powers and spiritual wickednesses in high places;" and what is to become of such poor, frail, feeble, weak creatures as we are? Who can subdue these great and mighty kings? With so many in league against us what can we do? What is to become of us? My text is the answer to that question: "*He will subdue our iniquities.*" That same blessed God who has pardoned our sins will conquer them. They may fight against us, but he will be more than a match for them: their fighting will end in their destruction. Omnipotence has marched into our hearts to trample down the power of sin. Eternal faithfulness has called in invincible strength and divine majesty to do battle against the serried hosts of darkness, and we shall overcome. "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I am going to speak briefly upon seven points, if time shall hold out for me to do so, and each of these seven points will show phases of the energy of evil which God will subdue.

One of the first powers of evil which a man perceives when the heavenly life begins to breathe within him is THE FASCINATING POWER OF sin. When grace in the soul is only like a little spark, and has not come to its brightness, yet the man discovers with alarm that he is held under the enchantment of evil. I do not know any other word which quite gives my idea except that one. Satan casts a spell over men. They come and hear the gospel, and they are impressed by it, and they see the reasonableness of the endeavour to escape from sin; they perceive the beauty of holiness, and they see that the way of God's salvation is a very glorious one, namely, by faith in Jesus Christ, and they begin to yield; but yet they neither flee from their sins nor lay hold on the salvation of Christ, but remain as persons besotted, who act contrary to reason. In some cases one sin, in some cases another, seems to fascinate men like the eyes of the fabled basilisk. As certain snakes paralyse their victims by fixing their eyes upon them, so do certain sins paralyze those who are under their influence, so that none can arouse them to escape. Sin makes men mad. Against their reason, against their best interests, they follow after that which they know will destroy them. They are slaves, though they wear no fetters of iron; captives, though no walls enclose them. The magic arts of evil have taken them in a net, and wrapped them about with invisible bonds, from which they cannot escape.

In many cases Satan exercises over men a kind of soporific power. He puts them to sleep. I do not know whether there is anything in

mesmerism or not, but I know that there is a devilish sleep-creating charm which Satan casts over men. They are no sooner a little awakened, and startled, and persuaded to escape for their lives, than suddenly they fold their arms again, and crave a little more sleep. They are nodding over a prospect which, a few hours ago, made their hair almost stand on end. They go back to do the deed which they dreaded, and which they know to be evil and destructive. They forget the Saviour whose charms began to tell upon them, and renew their covenant with Satan from whom they had almost escaped. In the matters of the soul you have not merely to get men awake, but to keep them awake. Over the arctic traveller there comes a tendency to sleep in the cold—a tendency which he cannot resist. He may be awakened by his fellow and shaken out of his torpor, but by-and-by he is anxious to sleep again; they march him on between two, perhaps, and try to keep him awake, but still he cries, "Let me sleep." He begs to be allowed to lie down and slumber. Such is the power of Satan over some of you who are present here: you wish that we would let you be quiet, and go on in your sins, without worrying you with our warnings. I have shaken you sometimes; at least, I have tried to do so; and then, after all, you have gone to sleep, and still you are asleep, nodding with hell beneath you, with the wrath of God abiding on you. It seems as if you could not be decided,—you could not be resolute,—you could not run away from sin, but were held by mysterious bonds—held, worst of all, by a dreadful indifference which makes you slumber yourselves into ruin. Do you think one ungodly man in his senses would remain what he is and where he is while there is a hope of being renewed, if it were not for some strange enchantment which is exercised upon him by sin? What art of wizard can equal the magic of sin? What other witchery can cast men into such insensibility? If I were to cry "Fire! fire!" in this place to-night the most of you would rush to the first door or window; but yet when we tell you of what is infinitely worse—namely, of the wrath to come, and the anger of Almighty God, you are in no great alarm, nay, you sit at your ease and hear all about it. The story of your future destiny is heard and heard, till men think no more of it than of an old wives' fable, but still sleep on in their sin.

I have known this witchery to enthral men who have been somewhat awakened. By the month and by the year together they have been aroused, and have been apparently very earnest; and after all sin has charmed them with its siren song, and they have returned like the dog to its vomit, or the sow which was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Now, I am rejoiced to think that, if there is any life in you, if the Lord enables you to look to Jesus Christ, his Son, for salvation, he will subdue your iniquities. Man, he will help you to escape from the magician's wand. Sin shall no longer delude and ensnare you. He will so set eternal things before you by the power of the divine Spirit that you will not dare to sleep any longer: he will so convince you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, that he will slay the enchanter, break his spell, and free you from his black arts. May the Lord set every fascinated one free at this good hour. May he pronounce the word which will unbind the enchanter's charm, and we shall then see the fulfilment of the text, "He shall subdue our iniquities."

A second form of the force of sin in most men is ITS DEPRESSING POWER. When men are really awake, and no longer under the witchery of sin, then Satan, and their flesh, and the sin that dwells in them, conspire to make them think that there is no hope of salvation for them. The evil ones mutter "It is no use your trying to be saved. You do not stand the smallest chance." Jeeringly the tempters cry, "Look at your sins! Look at your sins!" Satan, who aforesaid did not want us to look at sin, becomes all on a sudden eager that we should take to self-examination and confession. He who is the father of lies sometimes finds truth answer his purpose so well that he uses it with terrible effect; but even then he uses it to support a lie. He suggests to the heart the thought, "If you had not sinned so much you might have been forgiven, but you have piled on the last ounce that has broken the back of mercy; you will never be saved." Then comes the second suggestion, "You know you have tried already. You did keep yourself pretty steady for a time, but it all broke down. There is not the slightest use in venturing again upon this hopeless business. Depend upon it, there is a divine decree against you: you are one of the reprobate. There is no hope for you at all. Don't you see how false you are? You never make a resolve but you break it. You made an awful failure of it last time, and so you will again." Then there comes up again in the soul the depressing thought, "Perhaps it is not true after all that there is any mercy for sinners. It is very possible that there is no such power in the blood of Jesus as the preacher wants you to think." Once get a man upon the rails of doubt and you can draw him on as far as you please. It is interesting to see a man go on doubting in the style I once followed. I doubted everything till at last I doubted my own existence. Now I have at least a little bump of common-sense, and I laughed outright at myself when I got as far as that, and the ridiculousness of the situation brought me back again to believe. To run right on to a *reductio ad absurdum* and prove the absurdity of your own unbelief is a very useful method of bringing a doubting spirit to a measure of belief.

Yes, I know that this is the way of sin. It depresses the man. "I would, but cannot believe," says he. "I would have a hope, but I cannot believe that my name is amongst God's elect ones. I cannot think that the blood of the atonement was shed for me"; and so on. What is to be done when you feel this, and wish to conquer it? What is to be done but to fly to a promise like this in the text, "He will subdue our iniquities"? Yes, this despondency of yours the Lord Jesus will subdue. Believe that he is able to cut off Giant Despair's head, and dismantle his castle, and set his prisoners free. Some have almost gone to the knife and to the halter in their despair, and yet the Lord Jesus Christ has restored them to joy. Many a despairing soul have we had to deal with, and we have seen the Lord vanquish its misery and chase away its sorrow. Satan did his best to keep the soul from the joy which it might have had there and then; to keep it from the feast which was spread for it, from the blessing which God had prepared for it; but he could not prevail, for the hour of hope had struck. O, cast-down one, be comforted, the Lord will subdue your iniquities in this respect. If you will but look to Jesus Christ he will say to you, "Be of good

comfort." He will tell you that your sins are forgiven, and breathe hope into your soul.

This is a second blessed way in which God subdues our iniquities: by casting out their depressing power. This he does by showing what a glorious Saviour Christ is: how he is divine, and therefore equal to any emergency, how his atonement is of a value that never can be limited, how he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." This he does by applying the precious promises to the soul by his own Holy Spirit, who leads men to believe in God despite their despair, hoping against hope, and thus the snare is broken, and their iniquities are subdued. O glorious victory of all-conquering love, sin's iron yoke of dark despondency is broken, and the captives lead their captivity captive. Hallelujah!

But now, thirdly, the Lord has power to subdue sin in another form of its force, namely, ITS DOMINEERING POWER.

What a domineering thing sin is over men. Any one sin will lord it frightfully over a man. I know a man in his senses: at any rate, he has never been in Bedlam yet: in business he is as sharp and cute a man as can be, and yet he drinks himself into foolishness, into madness, and even into delirium tremens. He has done this several times, and owns to the madness and wickedness of the deed, and yet he will repeat his insane and suicidal course. He has drunk away all his estate; from a man of property he has descended to become a very inefficient working-man. He has drunk away all his wife earns, for he does not earn much himself now, and he is mean enough to let the poor woman kill herself to find him with food. He drank a horse and cart a fortnight ago. He went out of the house upon a business errand for his wife, pulled up at a drink-shop, drank till his money was gone, and so he sold the means by which his wife has kept him out of the work-house. I dare say he is here: let him take it home to himself, he knows that it is true. He never went home again till the last ear of that horse had been drunk. And yet he would not like anybody to say that he is a fool, though I beg leave to have my doubts. His sin domineers over him. Only let drink come to him and say, "Go and do a mad thing," and he does it directly. Expense, pain, disgrace, disease, poverty, and an early death—all these are demanded by the drink demon, and his victims cheerfully pay the tax. Why, now, if I were persuaded that it was the duty of any one of you to go and spend every penny that you have, and starve your own children, in order to support a child at the Orphanage, you would not see it, I dare say. I should be a very long while before I could persuade you to such a thing as that. I am sure I should not wish you to do so; but even if it were right I could not get you to do it. Yet things far more preposterous are done greedily at the bidding of drink. This devil of drunkenness comes to a man, and he says, "Come along with me. Leave your fireside, and your wife and little ones, and associate with the lowest of the low. Come and spend everything you have upon stuff that will muddle your head, harden your heart, and destroy your character. Sell your household furniture, and drink till all your comrades call you a jolly good fellow. Pawn your children's shoes, so that the little ones cannot even go to Sunday-school." The man goes along as meekly as a lamb. And he has done that scores

of times. He knows what a fool he is, and yet he will do it again if he gets a chance. Oh, the domineering power of sin! It is not the one sin of drunkenness only, for there are other men who are domineered over by their lusts. It is a delicate question to talk about, but I dare say there are some here who are slaves to the vilest of lusts, and it becomes me to be plain with them, and assure them that persons living in fornication or adultery cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Then there is anger, which carries men away as with a flood; they cannot restrain themselves; the least thing sets them off boiling with passion. They say they cannot get the mastery in this respect, and it is perfectly true; but there is a stronger power than ours which can be brought in, by which the victory can be won. Sin in some form or other has bound us hand and foot, and made us slaves. Do you wish to be free? Do you wish to be delivered from the tyranny of sin? Then I do not advise you to do anything in your own strength in the hope that you can accomplish deliverance; but cry to Christ at once, whose precious blood can blot out the past, and change you for the future. Give yourself up to him, and be made a new man in Christ Jesus. Oh, you did try to mend, you say. One of our kings used by way of swearing to say, "God mend me"? That was his regular expletive till somebody said that he had tried that oath long enough; he thought that God could more easily make a new one than mend him. That is just the truth about you. There is no mending you. You need to be made new creatures in Christ Jesus. It will be by far the easier work of the two, though in itself it will be impossible to you. The Lord can do it, he can make you such a new man that you will not know yourself the next time you meet yourself; you will be so entirely new that you will begin to fight against your former self as your worst enemy. Oh for an earnest cry at this good hour, "Lord, save me! I am sinking in the depths of my sin. Jesus, stretch out thy hand as thou didst to sinking Peter. Save me, or I perish." Jesus will lift his royal hand, and cause both winds and waves to lie still before him; for it is written, "He will subdue our iniquities." The domineering power of sin is readily broken when Jesus enters the heart, but never till then. We refuse to obey our lusts when we bow our necks to the pure and holy Saviour. What a change he works! Speak ye, who best can tell, ye who have felt it! Ah, Lord, we bless thee that it is even so "thou wilt subdue our iniquities."

Now, fourthly (for I must be brief on each point), there is another power about sin, namely, ITS CLAMOURING POWER. I do not know any other word just now which so nearly expresses what I mean. Some of us know that we are forgiven, and we know that the domineering power of sin is broken in us, and our old sins have been long washed away by the blood of Christ, so that God does not know anything about them. You say that is a strange expression. It is no stranger than the Scriptures warrant, for the Lord says of our sins that he will remember them no more for ever: and I believe that he means what he says. But as for my transgressions, I recollect them when God does not, and they come up before me, and they howl at me. "You be saved?" says one of my sins: "You?" "Remember what you did while yet a youth." Sometimes a thousand of them at once make an awful din, and

howl out, "Guilty, guilty, guilty, and doomed to die." Then one two bigger sins than the rest take the lead, howling with a deep bass "Condemnation! condemnation! condemnation!" I have tried argue with these memories of sins. When the dogs have barked in this fashion I have tried to put them down. Conscience has come out with his big whip, and he has whipped them till they howled more than ever. Conscience has said "Why, even now that you are a Christian you are not what you ought to be. You still fall short of your own standard. You condemn yourself while you are preaching. You know you do." Then all the dogs have howled again, as if they were only now beginning their horrid music. You have never heard perhaps a whole kennel full of sins all howling at once, but it is a most awful noise at night. If you listen to the voice of these clamorous dogs you will wish that you had never been born, or could cease to exist. No voice that I know of, short of the one in the text, can make them still. But the Lord Jesus can subdue our iniquities, and when he steps into the middle of these dogs they lie cowed at his feet. As he speaks with gracious words of pardon the hell-hounds vanish; and instead of their baying you hear the sweet voice out of heaven: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Did you ever experience this delightful change? It is something like the case of a new comer at a court of law, who one day went with a magistrate and sat on the bench. A prisoner was brought up, and evidence was given, and the counsel against the prisoner spoke; and this person said to his friend, the magistrate, "You may as well end it, the man is clearly guilty. Wind the case up, and let us go to dinner." But the magistrate said, "You must listen and hear the advocate on the other side, and the case will look very different." When he listened to the advocate on the other side, he began to whisper, "I have my doubts about that now." As he listened further, he said, "I am glad you do not condemn that man. What a mistake I made; he is as innocent as a new-born babe. That advocate has done his work wonderfully." The prisoner was acquitted. It is so with us. When our sins plead against us we readily allow that we are hopelessly ruined. But, oh, when our blessed Advocate takes up his brief, when the Wonderful, the Counsellor urges his plea, and pleads that our sins were laid on him, what a change comes over the face of things! The sin is owned and then covered, lack of righteousness is acknowledged and then supplied, condemnation is recognized as just, and then seen to be with equal justice put away for ever. Picture yourself in court. There are the bills, and they are put in evidence against you. "Do you owe those bills?" "Yes." "Have you anything to say why you should not be treated as a defaulting debtor?" "No." But when the man is able to reply, "Yes the charges are all paid:" that settles the matter. So when the believer can say, "Lord Jesus Christ, thou hast paid all my debts for me"; and when Christ shows his wounds, and says, "I have put them all away, for I bore them in my own body on the tree,"—oh, then the case is ended, and the clamour of our iniquities is subdued; and so the text is again true "He will subdue our iniquities."

But I shall have my time gone, otherwise I wanted to say that this is true as to THE DEFILED POWER OF SIN. Do you know, brother

and sisters, that after we are quite forgiven, and after the domineering power of sin has gone, yet the defiling power of sin is a great affliction to us? Our experience is embittered by the corruption of sins long ago dead, which send forth a dreadful rottenness, and make our thoughts a terror to us. Some of you were converted late in life, and you have very much, I am sure, to trouble you about in the influence of evil upon your memory. Perhaps this very night while I am speaking there has come up into your mind—though you cannot bear to think of it—some wretched scene in which you played a guilty part. Even the holiest words when you are in prayer will sometimes suggest to you a loose song that you used to sing, and a casual expression which has no special meaning to others will arouse a thousand vile remembrances in you. This is what I mean by the defiling energy of sin: it is a great plague to many believers, especially to those converted after years of gross sin. In addition to that, many of you may have experienced the defiling power of sin in another form—when Satan has suggested blasphemous thoughts and abominable ideas to you. You cannot bear them. You are ready to fly to the ends of the earth to escape the venom of these hornets, but still they buzz around you, and will not be quiet. You could almost tear your heart out of your body if you could thereby expel these vile suggestions, but they will not go. They descend in perfect floods, they are mud showers, or worse than that, fire showers, and they fall upon your poor brain, and there is no getting out of the diabolical tempest. Ah, I remember when words I never heard from human tongue rushed through my ear, filling my heart with blasphemies which I never thought of—profane suggestions which made me tremble like a leaf as they poured through my poor brain; I could have died sooner than they should be there; and yet they were rushing through my mind, and bearing all before them. Many of God's people are tried in that way. What is to be done? If old memories, and if satanic suggestions come upon you to defile you, what is to be done but to fly to this text—"He will subdue our iniquities"? Let us plead this in prayer. Lord, conquer my memory, and wash it from the filth which clings to it: put away its pollution from me. Lord, chain up the devil, and rebuke his suggestions. Let thy poor child have space for breath, and time to sing, and opportunity to pray; and do save me, I beseech thee, from the infernal suggestions which now torment me.

Some of you know nothing about this, and I hope you will abide in happy ignorance of it; but those of you who do know it will perceive whereabouts I am, and you will triumph in this priceless promise, "He will subdue our iniquities." Look to Jesus Christ for power over infernal suggestions, and over evil memories, and he will give you that mastery; and it may be you shall never again be tried in that way as long as you live; for frequently the Lord gives such sudden and decisive deliverance that, between that one battle and heaven, the Christian pilgrim pursues his way and never meets Apollyon again.

We have now reached sixthly. The Lord our God will subdue sin in ITS HAMPERING POWER. I am speaking, of course, to Christians in these latter points. There is a hampering power about sin. I will just hint at some instances of it.

Many believers might do a great deal of service for Christ and his

church, but they are hampered by shame. They are ashamed, afraid, alarmed, where there is nothing to be troubled at. They indulge a foolish distrust of God. Their fear may once have been modesty, but it has grown rank, till it is not now the kind of modesty which is wholesome. They might serve God, but they are ashamed to make the attempt: ought they not to be ashamed of such cowardice? Some, again, are hindered in their joy and their peace by unbelief. They are always doubting, inventing fears, planning suspicions, compiling complaints. This cometh of evil and leadeth to no good. It is a dreadful thing to be hampered from doing good, and hampered from glorifying God, by an inveterate tendency to unbelief.

Others are hampered by frivolity. Many of us have merry spirits, but some are all levity. They were cradled in a bubble, and made to ride upon thistle-down. It is a pity when a man has no solidity of character, and runs to froth, for this sin dwarfs his manhood and dries up his vigour. Oh that the Lord would subdue this form of iniquity.

Some I know, too, are very unstable: they are never the same thing two days together. They might have borne fruit if they had kept where they were, but they have been transplanted every week, and so have never taken root. They have undertaken a dozen works, but they have done nothing. Unstable as water, they shall not excel.

Some, again, are hampered by pride. There is no use in denying it. The natural tendency of many persons is to a silly pride. When they were children they could not have a new frock but they gloried in it; and since then they cannot have twopence more than their neighbours but they become almost unbearable. I know some who I hope are Christians, but they have a dreadful tendency to swell; they will grow before your very eyes if any one will but favour the process. They have always looked upon the many—the multitude—as being far inferior to them because their grandfather's grandfather was either a knight, or a baronet, or a foreigner of unknown degree: they feel that they are superior sort of people. This is a great drawback to godly workers, especially when it makes them feel that they could not go amongst poor people. Those who do go to visit the sick poor are often quite unable to reach their hearts, because of their stiffness of manner.

Some professors are slothful. They have a torpid liver, and are always afraid of doing too much. They are lethargic, Dutch-built, broad-wheeled-waggon sort of Christians, and slow are all their movements in the work of the Lord. They do not move at all by express; indeed, they are distressed by zeal, and disgusted by enthusiasm. The Lord subdue these iniquities for us.

Others are hampered by a quick temper. They cannot take things calmly; they snap and snarl, and scarcely know why. They boil over so soon; they are very sorry for it directly afterwards, but that does not cure the scalds. There is no use in breaking the tea things because you can rivet them afterwards: they are not much improved by it. Some must be for ever fighting, for peace is stagnation to their burning spirits.

I have given a long list of these hampering sins. What is to be done with them? "Well," says one, "I do not think we can do anything, sir; these are our besetting sins." Now, do not make any mistake about

it, if there is any sin that gets the mastery over you, you will be lost : you are bound to conquer every sin, mind that. You may call it a besetting sin or not, but it must be either overcome by you, or it will be your ruin. A man may plead that a certain fault is his besetting sin; but I am not so sure of it. A sin that you wilfully indulge, is that a besetting sin? Certainly not. If I had to cross Clapham Common to-night and three stout fellows beset me to take away whatever I had got, I would do my little best in self-defence. That is what I call besetting a man. A besetting sin is a sin that sometimes surprises a man; and then he ought to show fight and drive the besetting sin away. If I were to walk over the common every night, arm-in-arm with a fellow who picked my pocket, I should not say that the man "beset" me. No, he and I are friends, evidently, and the robbery is only a little dodge of our own. If you go wilfully into sin, or tolerate it, and say you cannot help it—well, you have to help it or you will be lost. One thing is certain—either you must conquer sin or sin will conquer you, and to be conquered by sin is everlasting death. Well, what is to be done? Fall back upon this gracious promise—"He will subdue our iniquities." They have to be subdued: Jesus will do the deed, and in his name we will overcome. If we are slothful, we will, in God's strength, do ten times as much as we should have done had we been naturally of an active turn. If we are angry we will school ourselves till we become meek. Some of the most angry men that ever I have known have come to be the meekest of men. Remember Moses, how he slew the Egyptian in his heat, and yet the man Moses became very meek by the grace of God. You must overcome your sin, my dear hearer, be that sin what it may. Whatever else you forget of this evening's sermon I want to leave that in your heart: you must overcome sin. By the blood of the Lamb it is to be done. By the power of divine grace it must be accomplished. Up! slay this Agag that you thought to spare. Hew him in pieces before the Lord, or else the Lord will hew you in pieces one of these days. God give you grace to get the victory.

Now, the last and seventh point, God will deliver you from THE INDWELLING POWER OF SIN. Sin nestles in our nature. Its lair is in the jungle of our heart, and if we are believers in Jesus Christ we must hunt it out. The first thing the Lord does with this indwelling sin is to neutralize it. He puts in his indwelling Spirit to subdue it and overcome it. Next, he begins to drive it out. He said of the Canaanites, "By little and by little I will surely drive them out." Thanks be to God, he has driven out certain of our sins already. I know that I speak to some who are not tempted now to vices that once ruled them with a rod of iron. You have conquered the grosser shapes of sin. Brother, the day will come when there will not be one Canaanite left in the land; when, if you should search through and through, there will be no tendency to sin, no wandering of heart, no error of judgment, no failure of righteousness, no inclination to transgression. You will be as perfect as your covenant head, Jesus Christ. Where will you be then? Not here, I trow. I notice that God always puts his jewels into fit settings, and the proper setting for a perfect man is the perfect joy of heaven. In a pure region the pure heart shall dwell; and you,

believer, shall go on towards that sacred height, till, one of these days your Lord will say, "Dear child, you have fought long enough with corruption and sin; come up hither; the conflict is all over now." You will look back when you get up to heaven, and you will say to yourself, perhaps—if you can have any such regrets—"I wish I had conquered those sins earlier, fought against them more earnestly, watched against them more vigilantly. Oh, that I had honoured and glorified my Lord more." However, forgetting all about regrets, we will sing a song we will raise when we find ourselves quite free from the power of sin! What a song! O, you bad-tempered brother, when your anger is all gone, and you will never be angry again, will you not sing? Ah you, brother, a little inclined to laziness, when you find that you can serve God night and day, will you not sing? And some of us who are inclined to despondency, when our gloom is all gone, and we become everlasting joy and sunshine, will not we sing? Yes, I am going to say—

"Then, loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
While heaven's resounding mansions ring
With shouts of sovereign grace";

I did utter that resolution once in the pulpit, and when I came down the stairs an aged woman said to me, "You made a mistake in your sermon to-night." "Dear soul," I said, "I dare say I made a dozen." "Ah," she said, "but you made one great one. You said that you were more to God's grace than anybody, and therefore you would sing the loudest. But," she said, "you won't, for I shall." I find all fellow Christians, both men and women, are resolved that they will sing the loudest to the praise of grace divine. This shall be heaven, only heaven. There shall be a grand contention among the birds of paradise which shall sing most sweetly of free grace and dying love. What a heaven there will be, and what music there will be in heaven when our iniquities are subdued. How will the Lord look down with joy upon us all when he shall see us all made like his Son, perfect and faultless, glorious. Then we will sing, "He has subdued our iniquities. Oh, come let us sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously, and all our iniquities has he cast into the sea."

Anticipate that joy, and begin to sing to-night, and let this be the matter of your song, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord." May that victory be yours and mine. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans vii. 7-14
viii. 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—489, 552, 652.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TAUGHT THAT WE MAY TEACH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.”—Ezekiel xl. 4.

WE learn from this text something concerning Ezekiel himself. He was certainly one of the greatest of the prophets; his visions remind us of those of John, both for their brightness, splendour, and number, and yet this eminent prophet was, nevertheless, styled “son of man.” He is continually called by that name. The title is used over and over again throughout the book of his prophecies—“Son of man”—to remind him that even the seer, the prophet, the inspired, the man who was indulged with vision upon vision, was still only a man. The best of men are men at the best. Those eyes that are strengthened to behold the cherubim, and to gaze upon the stupendous wheels of providence, are still only the eyes of a son of man. The title was used to teach him humility, and also to remind him of the condescension of God towards him, and to fill him with awe and wonder that he should be chosen from the rest of mankind, though no more than they, to see such wondrous sights, withheld from other eyes. To us this wears a very promising aspect, for if God can reveal himself to one “son of man,” why not to another? And if God can speak, as he did speak, so wonderfully through Ezekiel, one son of man, why not through you? why not through me? for we, too, are sons of men. We have no worthiness or fitness; neither does Ezekiel claim any. He is reminded of his descent: he is still one of the sons of men. Oh, be of good comfort, you who think that God can never use you—you who are poor in spirit, and wish to serve him, but deeply feel your own insignificance. Remember that God is able to do for you exceedingly abundantly above what you ask or even think. He can yet reveal his Son in you, and himself to you, and by you, after such methods as you have never dreamed of; and, possibly, the painful experience through which you are passing even now may be preparing you to stand upon yet loftier mounts, and to behold visions of God, which in happier days

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you shall tell out to the house of Israel, by which multitudes shall be blessed through you.

This is our present subject: we will speak upon *the manifestations with which God favours certain of his servants*. Then, secondly, we will dwell upon *their responsibility while they are enjoying such manifestations*: they are bound to behold with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and set their heart upon all that God shall show them. And then, thirdly, we will speak upon *the object which God has in giving these manifestations to his more favoured people*. It is that they may declare all that they see, that the whole house of Israel may, as it were, see by these favoured eyes, and hear by these chosen ears, and may set their hearts upon the word of the Lord because another has first done so.

I. First, I shall have a little to say upon **THE MANIFESTATIONS WITH WHICH CERTAIN OF GOD'S SERVANTS ARE FAVOURED**.

The Lord Jesus Christ does draw near in a very special manner to some of his people. He did to Ezekiel: for I take it that the man, mentioned in the chapter, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, is none other than our divine Lord, who, though a man, yet exceeds all men in the brightness of his wondrous person. It was he, doubtless, who appeared to Ezekiel. Long before Christ came on earth to die he appeared to his servants in different ways. He sojourned with Abraham as a wayfarer, for such he found the patriarch to be. He wrestled with Jacob at the brook Jabbok, for Jacob was wrestling with a sore trial. It was he that revealed himself to Moses when the bush was burning; and it was he that stood by Joshua's side as the man having a drawn sword in his hand. In divers ways and forms he proved that his delights were with the sons of men. Or ever the Word appeared in actual flesh and blood, he communed here and there with his chosen servants. He will show himself to any of you who seek him. He will unveil the beauties of his face to every eye that is ready to behold them. There is never a heart that loves him but he will manifest his love to that heart. But, at the same time, he does favour some of his servants who live near to him, and who are called by him to special service, with very remarkable manifestations of his light and glory.

These revelations are not incessant. I suppose that no man is always alike. John was in Patmos I know not how long; but he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's-day" on one occasion, and he specially notes it. I do not suppose that Daniel or Ezekiel saw visions every night, or beheld the glories of God every day. Humanity is scarcely capable of the incessant strain of a perpetual manifestation of God. These things are, as we shall see, "like angels' visits, few and far between." There is a fellowship that can always be kept up, but the flood tide of manifestation—a noon-day revelation—will not last on continually. Ezekiel enjoyed a special manifestation, and he tells us when it was; for men do not see God's face without recollecting it. He knew the date, and recorded it. "In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten." Days of heavenly fellowship are red letter days, to be remembered so long as memory holds her seat.

Yes, and it is noteworthy that *the occasion of these manifestations was one of great distress*. Five-and-twenty years of captivity must

have been enough to wear down the spirits of God's servants. Hence, he whose feet are as fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, comes and manifests himself to his people, burning like brass in a furnace, giving them their times of comfort after twenty-five years of captivity. He says, too, that it was fourteen years after the city had been smitten, after it had been laid as a ruinous heap. Then God appeared. Oh, beloved, when you have been long sorrowing you may expect bright days. The coal-black darkness will brighten after all. Nights do not last for ever. Whenever you have much joy, be cautious; there is a sorrow on the road. But when you have much sadness, be hopeful; there is a joy on the way to you; be sure of that. Our blessed Lord reveals himself to his people more in the valleys, in the shades, in the deeps, than he does anywhere else. He has a way and an art of showing himself to his children at midnight, making the darkness light by his presence. Saints have seen Jesus oftener on the bed of pain than in robust health. There were more manifestations of Christ in Scotland among the heather and the hills in the days of bloody Claverhouse than there are now. There was more seen of Christ in France, I do believe, in the days of the Huguenots than ever is seen now. I fear me that our Master has come to be almost a stranger in the land in these days, compared with what he was once, when his people wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented; for then he was meeting them at every turn and corner. Let us hope that, if days are gloomy now, and we ourselves are in trouble, our Beloved will come and manifest himself to us as he does not to the world.

It appears, in this case, that *the manifestation to Ezekiel was made when he was put into an elevated condition*. He says, "In the vision of God he brought me into the land of Israel, and set me up upon a very high mountain." God has ways of lifting his people right up, away, away, away from mortal joy or sorrow, care or wish, into the spiritual realm. And then, when the mind has been lifted above its ordinary level, and the faculties are brought up by some divine process into a receptive state, he reveals himself to us. These times come not always, but blessed are they to whom they come at all. When on the mount alone with God their spiritual nature asserts supremacy over the body, till they scarcely know whether they are in the flesh or not, then the Lord reveals himself to them.

When he had elevated him thus it appears that *he conducted him to certain places*, for he says, "For to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither." God's children are brought in experience to unusual places, on purpose that they may get clearer sights of the love and grace and mercy of God in Christ than they could obtain elsewhere. I have sometimes been puzzled to know why I underwent certain states of mind. I have found out the reason occasionally: perhaps as often I have not. I remember preaching to you one Sabbath-day from the text, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and if ever a minister preached from that text fearing that it was true of himself I did. I was under an awful darkness all the while, and I could not tell why. But on the Monday evening there came to me one who, by his very appearance, I could see was not far from madness; his eyes were starting from his head, his face was

full of terror—and when he was in the room with me alone, he said, “You have delivered me from self-destruction. I am a man that God has forsaken, and no one has ever spoken to my soul or my experience till last Sunday night.” By God’s great grace and infinite bounty we were able to pilot that brother into smoother waters, and I hope that he now lives to rejoice in God. I felt thankful to the last degree that I had been dragged through all my depression, because I was able to help him. Sometimes our experience is for the good of others, and sometimes it is for our own good. You cannot see the beauty of certain gems unless you place them on black velvet. When you have something black behind, then you see their lustre. So there are promises of God in which you never will discover their very brightest meaning except they are set against some dark soul-trouble. Much of faith’s education may be called black-letter learning. Very black the letters are, too, and very ugly-looking, but they must be spelt over. You cannot see the stars in the day-time; you must wait till the sun has gone down. Many promises of God you cannot see till you are in the dark; and when the soul is in gloom it may be that the Lord allows it to get there, that it may gaze upon the starry promises, and value every ray of light that streams from them. So you see, dear friends, God leads his people from one place to another of Christian experience, along hills and dales, ravines and precipices—all in order that, their minds being elevated, they may be prepared to see bright visions of himself, and know him better, love him better, and serve him better.

However, it is not outward circumstances that can affect the divine purpose, *there must always be a movement of the divine Spirit*. In the third verse you read, “He brought me there.” When you get home just look through the chapter, and see how this is repeated. “And he brought me to the inner court, and he brought me to the north gate, and he brought me” to this and to that. We never learn a truth inwardly until God brings us to it. We may hear a truth, we ought to be careful that we do not hear anything but the truth; but God must bring that truth home. No truth is known well until it is burnt into us as with a hot iron. Some doctrines we can never doubt. “Oh,” said one to me, failing to convince me of some new theories, “no one could get a new idea into your head except with a surgical operation.” That witness is true if the new idea be contrary to the old-fashioned gospel. The things I preach are part and parcel of myself. I am sure that they are true. “Are you infallible?” say you. Yes, when I declare what is in God’s word. When I declare God’s truth, I claim infallibility, not for myself, but for God’s word. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” It will not do to be saying, “These are our views and opinions.” Why, if the doctrines of grace are not true, I am a lost man; if they are not the very truth of God, I have nothing to live for: I have no joy in life, and I have no hope in death. May God bring you, dear friends, into a truth, and I will defy the devil to bring you out of it. If God brings you to it, if he writes it as with his own finger upon your soul, you will know it with solemn certainty. People may say, “Where is your logic? and how does this consist with the progressive development of human thought?” and all that. I reply, “You can go and fiddle what tune you please; as for me, these things are part and parcel of

myself, and I have made them my own." I have gripped them, and they hold me fast : I have no choice about them : I do not choose to believe in free grace, I believe it because I cannot help it. When one was asked whether he held Calvinistic doctrine he answered, "No." "Oh," said the other, "I am glad to hear that." "Ay," said he, "but Calvinistic doctrine holds me." There is a great difference between holding truth and truth holding you. You will not hold truth aright unless you can say of it, with all your heart, "The Lord brought me into it;" "He brought me towards the south; he brought me into the inner court; he brought me forth into the outer court; he brought me to the temple." He did it all. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"; and there is no teaching like it, for he that is taught of God is taught infallibly.

Thus I have spoken upon the manifestations with which God favours certain of his people.

II. Now, secondly, let us notice **THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THESE CHOSEN MEN WHILE THEY ARE THUS FAVOURED.**

"The man said to me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee." Did he not mean this—"Use all your senses, all your faculties, all your wits to understand divine truth"? When the Spirit of God favours you with light, mind that you see; and, when there is a sound of grace, mind that you hear. Be not one of those forgetful hearers who behold their likenesses in a glass, and then go their way and forget what manner of men they are. Oh, how much more we should understand of God's word if we gave our mind to it. We tell our children to learn their lessons "by heart." If we put the full meaning into that expression, that is the way to learn the things of God. Learn them all over; take them into yourself by every faculty you possess; strive as God shall help you by his Spirit to get at their innermost meaning by every power that is given you.

First, he says, "*See with thine eyes.*" What are the eyes for but to see with? He means this,—look, pry, search with your eyes. Do not let the truth flit before you and then say, "Yes, I have seen it." No. Stop it. Hold it by meditation before the mind's eye, and see with your eyes. Look, look, look into it. Remember what is said of the angels: "Which things the angels desire to look into"; not "to look at," but "to look into." Looking to Christ will save you, but it is looking *into* Christ that gives joy, peace, holiness, heaven. Look into the gospel: let your eyes be intent and steadfastly fixed upon every truth, especially at choice times when God favours you with the noontide light of his face. Then be doubly intent upon his word.

And then he puts it, "*Hear with thine ears.*" Well, a man cannot use his ears for anything else, can he? Ay, but *hear* with your ears. Listen with all your might. You are to spy out the meaning with the mind's eye; but, besides that, try to catch the very tone in which the promise or precept has been uttered. Treasure up the exact words, for though cavillers call it folly to speak of verbal inspiration, I believe that we must have verbal inspiration or no inspiration. If any man shall say to you, "The sense of what your Father said is true, never mind his words;" you would reply, "Yes, but I would like to know

precisely what he said, word for word." I know that it is so in legal documents. It is not merely the sense that you look to, but every word must be right. God's word, as it came from him, came in such perfection that, even to the syllables in which the sense was clothed, there was infallibility about it. When I get God's word I would desire to hear it with my ears as well as see it with my eyes,—to see its sense and then to love the expressions in which that sense is conveyed to me. He cares little for the sense of the words who is not jealous over the words which convey the sense. Oh, brethren, whenever God does, by his word, open his heart to you, do not lose anything; do not lose a sound—a syllable.

The Lord demands something more. "*Set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee.*" Oh, but that is the way to learn from God—by loving all that he says—feeling that, whatever God says, it is the thing you want to know. It is well when your whole heart comes to know the truth, and, when it knows it, encompasses it about with warm affections, so that it may be like a fly in amber, the word in the midst of your heart, encased there, enshrined there, never to be taken away from you. Set your whole heart on the word. Some people like to read so many chapters every day. I would not dissuade them from the practice, but I would rather lay my soul asoak in half a dozen verses all day than I would, as it were, rinse my hand in several chapters. Oh, to bathe in a text of Scripture, and to let it be sucked up into your very soul, till it saturates your heart! The man who has read many books is not always a learned man; but he is a strong man who has read three or four books over and over till he has mastered them. He knows something. He has a grasp of thoughts and expressions, and these will build up his life. Set your heart upon God's word! It is the only way to know it thoroughly: let your whole nature be plunged into it as cloth into a dye.

The Lord bids us *do this towards all that he shall show us*. "*Set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee!*" We are to be impartial in our study of the word, and to be universal in its reception. Brothers and sisters, do you pick over God's Bible? I pray you, give up the habit. I have known professors who would not read certain chapters. Never read another till you have read that passage which now displeases you. Learn to love it; for, if there is a quarrel between you and a Scripture, it is you that is wrong, not the Scripture; and if there is any part of the word of which you can say "*I differ from that,*" the word will never alter: the party to alter is yourself. Try to follow the Lord fully, even though it should cause the revision of cherished sentiments, and even the alteration of your denominational connections. "*Are we to be so particular in little things?*" says one. Ay, it is in little things that loyalty comes out. A loving and obedient child obeys his father without saying, "*This is a great thing, and this is a little thing.*" "*Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*" The habit of trifling with little duties grows very soon into a seared conscience about larger matters. "*Oh, but we need not be so particular,*" says one. Indeed we must be. "*Why are you so precise?*" said one to a Puritan. "*Sir,*" said he, "*I serve a very precise God.*" "*The Lord thy God is a jealous God,*"—mind that; and he would have us to be a jealous

people as to all his word, whether of doctrine, or of precept, or of promise. Oh, for grace to be willing and ready to see all that he would have us see, and to hear all that he would have us hear, and to receive into our heart all that he would have us receive.

Thus, I have spoken upon the manifestations which God gives to some of his servants, and the responsibility under which they are placed by them.

III. But now, thirdly, what is the practical design of all this? **WHAT IS GOD'S REASON FOR MANIFESTING HIMSELF TO HIS SERVANTS?**

The object is this,—“Declare thou all that thou seest to the house of Israel.”

First, see it yourself, hear it yourself, give your heart to it yourself, and then declare it to the house of Israel. I have lately heard of a minister who said in the pulpit, “The doctrine of atonement,—I have heard a great deal about it, but I do not understand it.” He is going to take a holiday that he may solve some of his doubts. If he does not solve his doubts soon I should recommend him to extend that holiday for the term of his natural life. He who does not understand the doctrine of the atonement, should read “The shorter catechism,” and pray God to enlighten him. That is a book written for the young and ignorant, and it might be useful to many ministers. God grant us grace that we may know what we do know, and not attempt to declare to others anything but that which we have seen and heard and taken into our own hearts.

But that being done, we are to *tell the truth to others*, especially to those whom it concerns. He had seen the form and vision of a temple and a city; he was to speak of this to the house of Israel. Dear brother, you cannot tell who it may be to whom you are to speak, but this may be your guide:—speak about what you have seen and heard *to those whom it concerns*. Have you been in gloom of mind, and have you been comforted? The first time you meet with a person in that condition, tell out the comfort. Have you felt a great struggle of soul, and have you found rest? Speak of your conflict to a neighbour who is passing through a like struggle. Has God delivered you in the hour of sorrow? Tell that to the next sorrowing person you meet. There is such a thing as casting pearls before swine: that can easily be done by an imprudent talkativeness; but when you find people who are hungry, give them bread; when you find people that are thirsty, offer them water; when you find that they want a blessing from God, tell them of that which has been precious to your own soul.

Ay, but still this is not all your duty. God has shown us his precious word that we may tell it to the house of Israel. Now, the house of Israel were a stiff-necked people, and when Ezekiel went to them, they cast him aside, they would not listen. Yet, he was to go and teach the word to them. We must not say, “I will not speak of Christ to such a one; he would reject it.” Do it as a testimony against him, even if you know he will reject it. Go you, my brother, and sow your seed, and recollect that in the parable the sower did not only cast a handful on that fair spot of ground that was all ready for it, but he sowed among thorns and thistles, and he cast seeds even on the highway, from which the birds of the air soon removed it. “Give

a portion to seven and also to eight." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that, or whether it shall be alike good." Do thou go and tell what God tells thee. Remember what we read just now. "What I shall show you in secret that reveal ye in the light. What I have spoken to you in closets, that reveal ye upon the housetops." "Are we all to be preachers, then?" Yes, all that have been taught of God are to teach. "Are we all to stand up in public?" says one. I did not say that; but somewhere or other—perhaps in the pew where you now sit, or on the steps as you go out, or by the roadside, or in the shop to-morrow morning, you can all put in a word edgeways for Jesus Christ. Drop a sentence or two for the honour of his dear name. "I do not know what to say," says some one. Do not say it, then, brother. I would recommend you not to say anything if you do not know what to say; but if you have seen with your eyes and heard with your ears, and received into your heart, then you know what to say, and the first thing that comes to hand will be the best thing to say, for God, who knows the condition of people's minds, knows how to fit you to their condition, and make your experience as a Christian to tally with the experience of the man who wants the aid of your light. Go, and the Lord be with you.

If there are any here who have never seen the Lord, if they have any desire after him, if they have any sense of sin, if they have any wish for the eternal light, let them remember that gracious word, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," and that precious invitation, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

May the Holy Spirit bring you to trust in Jesus at once, and to the name of the Lord be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew x. 16—42.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—720, 814, 764.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ROADS CLEARED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

(Preached on an evening when the Tabernacle was left to strangers.)

“Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.”—Isaiah lviii. 14.

WHAT is the way, the way of salvation, the way to heaven? Jesus Christ says, “I am the way.” He is the Son of God, and he left the glories of heaven and took upon himself our nature and lived here. In due time he took upon himself our sin, and made atonement for it, and now he has gone up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, whence he will shortly come to judge the quick and the dead. The way to be delivered from sin, the way to heaven, is simply to trust in Jesus Christ. God has set him forth to be a propitiation for sin, and whosoever believes in Jesus Christ has his sin put away at once, whatever he may have done. Before Christ went to heaven he said to his disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” This is the way of salvation which we preach, unaltered and unalterable, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” In other words, trust *him* and you are saved.

This is the entrance into the way of salvation, and this is the track of that way even to the end: trust in Christ. “Are not good works needed?” says one. They always flow from faith in Christ. The man that would be saved from sin trusts Christ, and his nature is changed, and so he hates the sin that once he loved, and endeavours to honour the Christ who has saved him; but in the matter of our salvation, the ground and bottom of it is not our works, or tears, or prayers, but simple reliance upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. He is A and he is Z in the alphabet of grace. He is the beginning and he is the ending. “He that believeth in him hath everlasting life.” “He that believeth in him is not condemned,” and never shall be, for he has passed from death unto life. Such being the way, it is very simple. Straight as an arrow, is it not? And yet in this way there are stumblingblocks.

I. First, LET US SHOW WHY THIS IS.

The first reason is that *the way of believing is such an uncommon way.* Men do not understand the way of trusting. They want to see, to reason, to argue; but to trust in "God made flesh," dead, buried, risen, gone into heaven, they do not like *that*. Man says, "I cannot trust." How very difficult it would be for a cow, that has always lived by the day the short life that can be fed on grass, if it had to live by reason, as men do. It would be a new, strange way for the poor beast. And when man has to live by faith he is as awkward at it as a cow would be at reasoning. He is out of his element. What, am I to do nothing but trust the Saviour, and will he save me? Is that to be the top and bottom of it? It is so. "Then," saith the man, "I cannot get at it; there are stumblingblocks in the road."

Another reason is that men, when they are really seeking salvation, are *often much troubled in mind.* They are conscious that they have done wrong. Conscience pricks them. They feel that if God be just he must punish them for their wrong-doing. They are well aware that he knows the secrets of their hearts, and this alarms and distresses them, and when they are told that if they believe in Jesus Christ all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven, they wonder how it can be? If we put it very plainly, and say, "However great your guilt, however black your sin, wash in the fountain filled with blood, and you shall be clean,"—it looks plain enough, but they cannot see it. A sense of sin blinds them, and they grope in the noonday, like blind men, for the wall; stumbling over this and that which has no existence except in their own fears. Conscience makes unbelievers of us all; and stumblingblocks are created by our trembling condition. I do not know how it is to be otherwise.

Besides this, *men are often ignorant of the way of salvation.* I am not speaking now as though I blamed them. I was brought up myself to attend the house of God regularly. I do not suppose that on any Sabbath day, except through illness, I was ever absent. Yet when I began to seek the Lord, I did not know the way of salvation. I knew the letter of it, but not the real meaning: how can a man know it till the Spirit of God reveals it to him? The sun itself may shine, but a man will never see till his eyes are open. Until Christ comes, who is the light of the world, men will roam in darkness. Why, in this London of ours, the bulk of people are still without the knowledge that salvation is entirely of grace: that it is an act of divine mercy that saves a man; that a man is never saved by his zeal, or his prayers, or his tears, or anything that he does, but is saved entirely by the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. The gospel is not believed or accepted in its real meaning, and so men meet with stumblingblocks.

Satan is always ready to prevent souls from finding peace in Christ. He will inject all sorts of thoughts into men's minds: blasphemies infernal, thoughts incredible he will make to pass through the minds of men who are seeking Christ. He does not meddle with some people; he knows they are his, and will be his at last, but when a man once shakes himself up, and flees for his life, then the evil one raises all hell about his ears, and by his efforts many souls are made to stumble in a way which is smooth enough to the feet of faith.

Thus have I shown why there are so many stumblingblocks.

Now, by God's help, I am going to TRY TO LIFT SOME OF THEM OUT OF THE WAY.

The text says, "Take up the stumblingblocks." Now for a dead lift of some of them.

Here is one of them. One man says, "I would fain believe in this Jesus Christ of whom you tell me, but if I were to come to God through Christ, *would he receive me?*" Ay, that he will. Here is a text: "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." In all the history of the human race there never has been found a man that came to Jesus Christ whom Christ rejected yet. If you will seek to God in Christ with all your heart, and he shuts the door of mercy in your face you may turn round and say, "I am the first man that Christ refused to help, and now his word is broken, for he said, 'Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out,' and he has cast me out." Oh, my friends, some will not come because they are afraid of being rejected; but there is no sense in that fear. Christ cannot, will not, reject a single soul that comes to him, so, out of the way with that stumbling-block!

"But," says another, "I am a *very peculiar person*. I could very well believe that any man in the world who trusted Christ would be saved except myself; but I cannot think that he would save me, for I am so odd." Ah, my friend, I am odd myself, and I had the same feeling that you have. I thought that I was a lot left out of the catalogue. I always had the notion that my brother and my sisters could readily enough find mercy, but I—I could not see how I could be forgiven. I knew more about myself than I should like to tell; and I knew this about myself—that there was a peculiar guilt about me, besides many odd ways that I could not well shake off. Since then I have been the minister of a church that numbers nearly six thousand souls, and that for many years, and I have found out that nearly all of them are about as odd as I am; and so I have cast off the idea of my being so singular. If you knew other people you would find that there are other strange people besides yourself; and if God saves so many strange people, why should he not save you? "I should be a wonder," says one, "if I were saved." Then he will save you, for he delights to do wonders. He will crowd heaven with curiosities of mercy. Heaven will be a museum of prodigies of sovereign grace; and if you are one of that kind, be encouraged. You are the very man that is certain to be received. Go boldly to the gate, it shall not be shut in your face. Look to Jesus and live.

But I hear another say, "Sir, I have *such a horrible sense of sin*; I cannot rest in my bed! I cannot think that I shall be saved." Wait a bit there, my friend; wait a bit; let me speak to this person over here. What is your trouble? "My trouble is, sir, that I have no sense of sin. I know that I am a sinner, and a great sinner; but I do not think that I shall be saved, for I have no horrible thoughts." Will you change with the other man? Will he change with you? I should not advise either of you to make any change; for, in the first place, despairing thoughts are not necessary to salvation; and, in the second place, so long as you know yourself a sinner, and are willing to confess it, such thoughts are untrue. Where is it written in Scripture that we

are to despair in order to be saved? Is not the whole gospel "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"? Where shall you find it recorded in God's word that you are to be driven to remorse in order to find Christ? Repentance is quite another thing. To be sorry for sin, to hate sin, to wish to escape from it—this is a gospel blessing; but remorse—that threatening to destroy yourself, those tortures of mind—this is not desirable; and you may neither wish for it, if you have it not, nor yet despair because you have it, for salvation lies in Christ. Despairing one, look to the cross and live; and thou who dost not despair, look to the same cross and live; for there is salvation for every eye that looks to Jesus crucified.

I see another stumblingblock. A trembler cries, "I am afraid to come and trust Christ, because I do not know whether I am *one of the elect*." Well, I cannot tell you. I have never been to heaven to search the roll. A young friend over yonder is starting in business. He opened his warehouse last Monday, and he is in hopes that he may prosper in the world. My dear young man, why did you open your shop? Why did you not sit down in idleness and moan, "I would open a shop, but I do not know whether I am predestinated to prosper." If you do not try you will never prosper: that is quite certain. As to secret things we act upon the rule of common sense. When this service is over you will go home, will you not? But if you sit still and say, "I shall not go down the aisle because I do not know whether it is predestinated for me to get home," you will not get home, and some will think that you are predestinated to be a fool. Any man who talks about predestination as if it could be an excuse for living in sin and refusing the Saviour is acting like a fool. If you trust Jesus Christ I will tell you then that you are God's elect, to a certainty; for whosoever believes in Christ is called by the Spirit of God, and none are called in that way but those whom God has chosen from before the foundations of the world.

"Ah," says another person, "I think I have committed *the unpardonable sin*." Pray, sir, will you tell me what it is, because I have read a large number of books to make that discovery, and I have come to the conclusion that nobody knows what it is. Yet, though I am not sure as to what the crime may be, I can tell you whether you have committed it or not within a little. Do you desire to be saved? Do you long to be delivered from the power of sin? Then you have not committed the unpardonable sin, because it is a sin unto death, and after a man commits it he never has a living wish or desire after God from that moment. His conscience is seared as with a hot iron; and he learns to defy God, or to be utterly indifferent with regard to eternal things. But as long as there beats within your breast a desire after God, as long as you can heave a sigh of regret because of a wasted life, as long as one tear of penitence can bedew your eye, be not dismayed with the idea that you have committed the sin which is unto death, for you have done nothing of the kind. Let us lift that stumblingblock out of the way altogether.

"Oh, but," says another person, "my stumblingblock is this: that the whole thing *seems too good to be true*—that I, by simply believing in Jesus Christ, shall be saved." I confess that it does seem too good to

be true, but it is not. It is good, infinitely good, that your sin should be effectually pardoned, in a moment, freely and without price; but good as it is, it is like our God. God in Christ Jesus is clearly capable of marvellous deeds of grace. Treat God like God, and remember that his ways are as much above your ways, and his thoughts as much above your thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth. All the sins of a whole life he can strike out, as a man cancels a debt in his account-book. With one single mark of red ink he can write "received" at the bottom of the tremendous bill, and it is all gone, and gone for ever. There is none like thee, O God! there is none like thee! As Creator, none can make heavens and earth like thine; as Redeemer, none that can fetch a soul up from the pit as thou hast done it; and none can hurl sin into the depths of the sea as thou didst hurl it from the cross. Only trust the Saviour, then, and you shall see his great salvation. This stumblingblock about its being too good need not remain a moment.

I will not stay upon any more of these things, but will just say that there are some stumblingblocks that I cannot remove; they must always stand there, I am afraid.

An objector says to me, "I would believe in Jesus; I have no fault to find with him, but then, *look at his followers, many of them are hypocrites.*" Yes, we do look at his professed followers, and the tears are in our eyes, for the worst enemies he has are they of his own household. Judas kissed him and sold him. Many are like Judas still. Look here, my friend: what have you to do with that? Suppose Judas does betray Christ, is Christ any the worse for that? You are not asked to trust in Judas, you are asked to trust in Christ. "Oh," says one, "but they are all hypocrites." No, no: that will not do. A man takes a bad sovereign—takes half-a-dozen of them in the course of his lifetime. Does he say that all sovereigns are bad? If there were no good ones the bad ones would never pass. The reason why it pays to make bad sovereigns is because good ones are so valuable; and that is why it pays certain people, as they think, to pass themselves off as Christians. If there were no real Christians, there would be no pretenders to that name. How then can you make the excuse that because there are some hypocrites you will refuse Christ himself? "Ah," says one, "but I know a little about revival meetings and conversions. Don't you know what a lot were converted, and what became of them?" I know what you are thinking about, but I heard a friend tell a good story in reference to that matter. He said that, notwithstanding that we have to strike off a discount from our converts of those that are not genuine, yet the revivals are worth having, for there is a real gain in them; for, said he, the objection is something like that of an Irishman who had found a sovereign which was short in weight, so that he could only get eighteen shillings for it. The next time he saw a sovereign lying on the ground he would not pick it up, for, he said, he had lost two shillings by the other. Everybody laughs at him as acting ridiculously. So it is with objectors to revivals and special services. Suppose you do have to strike off the two shillings' worth, yet the eighteen shillings are clear gain; and *why should you be the bad two shillings,*

my friend? Why should *you*? I dare say you know yourself better than I do, and probably you may be the bad two shillings; but I did not say that you were, and I do not wish that you may be. Why should you not be a real convert, a true gain to the church of God? Because there are imposters in the world, is that a reason why I am not to come to Christ? I made you smile just now. It was that you might laugh to scorn this foolery which is so much talked of. Am I to refuse to eat bread because there are bad bakers? Will you never drink milk again because some milk has been adulterated? will you never breathe the air you live in because some air is tainted? Oh, talk not so. That stumblingblock ought not to want moving. If it be any hindrance to you I cannot help it; there it must be.

"But," says another, "here is my stumblingblock: if I were to believe in Christ, and become a Christian, *I should have to alter my whole life.*" Just so. I do not dispute that assertion. There would have to be a turning of everything upside down; but then he that sits upon the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new." Perhaps, my friend, you would have to give up your trade, for there are some trades that cannot be followed by a Christian man; and, if yours is such, it is better to give it up than lose your soul. Or you might have to give up the tricks and dodges of your trade. You must give them up, then. If anything you do would keep you out of heaven, it is better that you should become poor than that you should prosper in business by doing wrong and ruining your soul. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That is putting an extreme case, for nobody gains the whole world. It is only a few fourpences or shillings that men get by cheating. What profit can there be in that, if the soul is to be lost for it?

"Oh, but," says one, "*I should have to run the gauntlet in my family* if I became a Christian." Run the gauntlet, my friend. It is better to go to heaven under all opposition than to go to hell with the flatteries of God's enemies sounding in your ears. If you see a fish floating down the stream, you may know that it is a dead fish. Which way does a live fish go? Why, up-stream; and that is the way a man must go to heaven. "But I could not bear to be laughed at," says one. Poor soul. I have had, upon the whole, about as fair a share of ridicule as anybody living, but I do not recollect that one of my bones ever ached a minute about it; and I think that if I can bear my share, which is tolerably large, you ought to be able to bear yours without being quite overcome by it. Which is the better thing do you think—to be sneered at for doing right or to be commended for doing wrong? Surely it is manly and honourable to say, "I will do the right and follow Christ, whoever may sneer." What matters it? Dogs bark,—let them bark; but in God's name let us not give our souls away to find sops for them. "But my own brethren would be against me." Yes, Christ tells you that. He says, "He that loveth son or daughter more than me he is not worthy of me: a man's foes shall be they of his own household." You will conquer them yet by kindness and love; but I know there will be a wrench. In the higher classes a Christian man gets the cold shoulder, and among the lower orders our working men who talk of liberty are the biggest tyrants alive. The moment a man becomes a

Christian they point him out in the workshop; they jest and jeer at him from morning to night; and then call themselves true-born Englishmen. They may swear as much as they like, and use filthy talk, till you can hardly go down a street without feeling sick at the language you hear; but if a fellow workman chooses to go to a place of worship, and behave himself decently, then he is to be the butt of the workshop. This ought to come to an end, and would if men were men. But, my dear friend, I hope you are not to be cowed and kept down by opposition. If they laugh you into hell they cannot laugh you out again: recollect that. And if to win a few poor smiles, and escape a few silly sneers, you sell Christ, how will you answer for it when you have to stand before him, and he sits upon the great white throne, at last? Look at the martyrs—how they died for Christ. Think of Bunyan when he is brought before the judge, and the judge says, "You! a tinker! to go about preaching! Hold your tongue, sir." "I cannot hold my tongue," says Bunyan. "Then I must send you back to prison unless you promise never to preach again." "If you put me in prison till the moss grows on my eyelids I will preach again the first moment I get out, by the help of God." There is some grit in that man. Oh, that is the man that God loves; the man who against the whole world will do the right, and stand true to his Master. That stumblingblock I would not move away if I could: it is good for us to meet with opposition. I think that even now I see the King upon his throne at the last great day; and as he sits there, surrounded by his courtiers, and the blazing seraphim and mailed cherubim in all their brightness, he rises from his throne and looks afar, and cries, "Who cometh there? That is a man who suffered for me. When I was despised and rejected of men, he was despised and rejected for my sake. Make way, angels; make way, cherubim; make way, seraphim; stand back, and let him come. He was with me in my shame, he shall be with me in my glory. Come and sit even here, at the right hand of God, with me, for thou didst dare to be despised for me; and now shalt thou be with me in all the splendour of my reign." Oh, methinks we can leap over this stumblingblock, and be glad to think that it is there, for it will bring honour and glory and immortality at the last great day.

The last stumblingblock which I cannot move is this. A man will say, "But all this seems so new and strange to me. You want me to lead quite a new life. I do not comprehend it yet. I am to trust Christ whom I never saw!" Yes, that is where you are to begin. "And I am to see God whom I cannot see?" Yes, that is what you are to do. You are to live as in the daily consciousness of God's presence; and that you will do if you begin trusting Christ. "But *I cannot see what effect my trusting Christ would have upon me.*" No, you cannot see it, but it will have a most wonderful effect upon you. You will not be the same man after you have trusted the Saviour; the Spirit of God who gives you faith will change your whole nature. You will be as though you had been born again. "I don't see it," says one. No, but you might see it in this way. Here is a man that has a servant, and that servant believes his master to be everything that is bad; consequently, he does all that he can to annoy him. The master tries to mend the servant. He has spoken to him, and chided him; but he

goes on worse and worse. Now, suppose that I could go into the house and say, "My dear man, I beg you to believe in your master. He wishes you well. You have misunderstood him." Suppose that I could induce the servant to believe in his master,—why, my friends, he would be an altered man altogether. Do you not see that the moment he believed in his master he would try to please him? If he said, "My master is a noble man. I love him." From that moment the whole tenor of his life towards his master would be changed. Hence the great power of believing the Lord Jesus. The moment you trust him, you obey his commands, you imitate his example, and you give yourself up to his service.

Thus have I put before you, as best I can, the way of salvation. I thank you for coming on this special occasion. I may never see your faces again; and if I never do, this one thing is true—you have heard the way of salvation, even if you do not follow it. I shall be clear of the blood of every one of you in that great day of account when preacher and hearers will have to answer for how this Sunday night was spent. I have thought that, if I could have been clearly told the way of salvation when I was anxious about my soul, I should have gained peace long before I did; and so I have resolved that I will never let the Sunday pass without preaching the way of salvation; and it is this that for six-and-twenty years and more has held the multitude of people listening to me. I tell nothing but the old, old story. Why do people come? Do we deal in spiceries and nicknacks? No, but in bread; and people always want bread. I have given you to-night no fineries or niceties, but the plain word of salvation. Will you have it, or not? God grant you grace to receive salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are saved, and you may go on your way rejoicing in everlasting life.

God grant it, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xi. 1 to 27.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—430, 531, 397, 846.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

AN INDIOTMENT WITH FOUR COUNTS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God.”—Zephaniah iii. 2.

FOUR heavy counts of a terrible indictment against Jerusalem and the Jewish people. Is it not sad to reflect that Jerusalem was the city of the great king, and yet fell from its high estate? It was the place of the temple; there the light of God shone forth, while other nations were in darkness; there the solemn worship of God was celebrated, whilst false gods were being adored elsewhere; and yet its sin provoked the Lord till he gave it up to the destroyer. It is clear, therefore, that no degree of light, and no amount of privilege, can keep a people alive and right before God. If the heart be not changed, if the grace of God go not with outward ordinances, those who are exalted to heaven may yet be cast down to hell. The putrefaction of the best produces the worst, and when a city which has been favoured as Jerusalem was becomes a den of unclean beasts, then it is a den indeed. Neither Nineveh, nor Babylon, nor Tyre, nor Sidon could equal in criminality this once chosen city of the great king. Let us not, therefore, as a nation begin to exalt ourselves because of our privileges, for if we do not prove worthy of them the candlestick will be taken out of its place, and our darkness will be all the denser because of the light we have lost. If we walk not before the Lord obediently, it may please him to make this island as great a scene of destruction as the mounds of Babel or the rock of Tyre.

We usually take Jerusalem to be the type of a church, and it is one of the fullest types of the one church: “Jerusalem which is above, the mother of us all.” We may therefore regard the fate of Jerusalem as being a special warning to churches. In a church is God’s dwelling-place, there is the light of knowledge, there is the fire of sacrifice, out of it hath God shined. But a church may sadly decline. There is a church which is now worthy of the name of Antichrist: she went further and further astray, till she has made a man to be her head, and called him infallible, till she set up lords many and gods many, saints and saintesses, and innumerable objects of worship even to cast

clouts and rotten rags. There is a church against whom this indictment might be laid to-day: "She obeyed not the voice;"—she did not hear the gospel. "She received not correction;"—when reformers came she sought their blood. "She trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God;" but she went after others, and set up other intercessors than Christ, and rejected the true Head of the church.

Other churches may fall into like sin unless they are guarded by spiritual power. Remember Laodicea, and how she was spued out of the mouth of Christ, because she was neither cold nor hot. Remember Sardis, which had but a few names in it that were undefiled. Where are those cities and those churches now? Let desolation answer. It might be said of them as of Gilgal, of which the Lord said, "Go ye there to the place where my name was at the first, and see if there be one stone left of it upon another which hath not been cast down." Oh that we as a church, and all our sister churches, may walk before the Lord with holy jealousy as to doctrinal correctness, practical holiness, and inner spiritual life; for, if not, our end will be miserable failure. If the salt of grace be not in a church, it cannot be an acceptable sacrifice to God, nor can it long be kept from the corruption which is natural to all masses of flesh. What are one people more than another? and what is one community more than another? We are men by nature, prone to the same evil, and we shall fall into the same transgression unless the Lord that keepeth Israel shall keep us; and therein is our confidence, that he doth neither slumber nor sleep.

This text is not only applicable to a nation and to a church, but to individuals among God's own people, though of course only in a degree. Some of God's people follow Christ afar off, their spiritual life is better seen in their fears than in their confidences; they are trembling always, their hands are slack, their hearts are faint. We trust they are alive unto God, but that is all we can say. I fear it may be said of them, "She obeyed not the voice:" the gentle whisper of divine love falls upon a deaf ear. Oh, how often, brethren, has God spoken and we have not hearkened so as to obey his voice. I fear, too, that there are times when we have not "received correction," when affliction has been lost upon us. We have risen from a sick-bed worse than when we went to it. Our losses and crosses have provoked us to murmuring rather than to heart-searching. We have been bruised as in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, and yet our folly has not departed from us. And this is a very provoking thing, when we despise the rod and the hand that uses it, and turn not at the smiting of the Lord. Yet it is so with some of God's people: they obey not the voice, they receive not correction, and therefore it comes to pass that at times "they trust not in the Lord." They try to bear their trials themselves. They go to friends for advice, and they inherit a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is he that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." They get into a withered state; like the heath in the desert, they see not when good cometh, because they trust in man. Must not some of us plead guilty here?

To add to our faults, whenever we have backslidden we have "not drawn near to the Lord our God." The joy and the strength of the Christian life are found in living near to God, living like sheep close to the shepherd, wandering never, but lying down in green pastures to

which he leads the way, himself better than the pasture, our joy and our delight. But, alas! it may be said of some, "Thou hast restrained prayer before God." "Are the consolations of God small with thee? Is there any secret thing with thee?" Your transgressions and your iniquities have hidden your God from you. He walks contrary to you because you walk contrary to him. This is too, too often the case, with even those who do trust in Jesus, and have passed from death unto life; and whenever it is the case it means sorrow. He that is no child of God, but a hypocrite, may wander as far from the path of integrity as he chooses without having to suffer for it till the last day; but a child of God cannot sin without smarting for it. Is it not written, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for your iniquities"? Our Father whips his own children. The boys in the streets may do as they please, but our great Father is sure to chasten those he loves. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent."

At this time I do not intend to use the words of our text in any of those ways, but to take it as it may refer to unconverted persons, for it very clearly, without the slightest strain, describes many who are living far away from God, and I shall want you to give me your attention for a little time while I notice *four great sins*. When these are mentioned I shall try to dig into the text, to bring out of it *four hidden consolations*:—they are not apparent on the surface, but when faith applies the microscope and looks into the centre of the text, it discovers four things by which the penitent sinner may be encouraged to come to Christ.

I. First, here are FOUR MANIFEST SINS.

I wonder whether the fact that my text is in the feminine is intended in the providence of God that this sermon may be especially adapted to a woman: I cannot tell, but I should not wonder. I may have been moved to this text on purpose that some poor wandering sister may feel as if God specially directed it to her sex. It says *she*—"She obeyed not the voice." Whatever belongs to any of our race may be taken by all, since in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female. However, I point out the fact, and pray God that his word may be directed as he wills by the Holy Spirit.

The first sin is *not hearkening to God's voice*. Many have never hearkened to God's voice throughout a long life. They have heard it,—they could not help that; but they have never given heed, they have never lent an attentive ear, saying, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." He has spoken to many here present in *warnings*. He has said, "My daughter, if thou doest this, it will lead thee to grief and sorrow; if thou remainest hard, and careless, it cannot end well. Nothing can be right at the last which is not right now; wrong must bring woe with it." Sometimes this warning has come home into the heart, but the person of whom I am speaking has stifled it and said, "No, but I will go after mine own way and follow my own pleasure." That warning has come, perhaps, in the silence of the night, or in the very midst of the sin, a something that checked, a pulling of the rein, but the sinner could not be held in, nay, not with bit nor bridle, but he has taken the bit between his teeth, and dashed on in sin. Oh, remember, you that have neglected divine warnings; *you* may have

forgotten them, but God has not. When you who love your children have spoken to them and warned them, they may have gone their way and quite forgotten "what mother said," but mother recollected it: her tears flowed, and wrote the memorial of her rebukes upon her face. And God forgets not warnings he has tendered to the sons of men.

I address some, however, who have not only received warning and rejected it, but they have received much *teaching*. You were in a Sabbath school class while yet a girl; you knew the plan of salvation very early in life, and you know it now, but still you have not obeyed the voice. There is Christ, but you have not touched his garment's hem. There is the fountain filled with blood of which you have been accustomed to sing, but you have never washed therein: there is the bread of life, but you have never fed thereon, and in consequence you live not unto God. Oh, it is a sad thing when it can be said, "She obeyed not the voice."

To some who are here present God's voice has come by way of *ex postulation*. There are many expostulations in the word of God such as this—"Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, oh house of Israel?" "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up." "Say unto him, take away all iniquity, receive us graciously, and love us freely." Some of you had many such expostulations addressed to your heart and conscience, but you have not obeyed the voice.

And then at the back of this have come *invitations*, sweet invitations. In the Bible you have read them, in hymns you have sung them, from the pulpit you have heard them, from kind friends you have received them. Oh, how sweetly doth Jesus bid the hungry and the thirsty come to him; the heavy laden and such as are bowed down, to come and find rest in him. You used at one time to feel as if you would yield to these invitations; but you did not, and this sin lieth at your door, a stumblingblock in the way of your peace,—“She obeyed not the voice.” When men fail to do right, they usually commit the wrong which is the reverse of it. You have listened to other voices, the siren voice of temptation has enchanted you, the voice of flattery has puffed you up, the voice of Satan has beguiled you, the voice of the flesh has fascinated you, the voice of the world hath wooed you and hath held you captive.

While we lay this indictment before you some of you cannot help saying, "He means me: it is even so with me." The Lord give you repentance, and open your ear: for is it not written, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David"? Oh divine Spirit, let not men be deaf any longer, but touch them with thy finger, that they may hear the voice of God and live.

That is the first count of the indictment, and the second one is like unto it and groweth out of it—"she received not correction." When men refuse God's voice they soon become more hardened still and reject his correction, like a horse which does not answer to the rein, and by-and-by even kicks at the whip, and will not be ruled at all. The Lord's correction comes to us sometimes from *his word*, when he speaks in

anger and reminds us that his wrath abideth on the man that believeth not in Christ. Oh, there are heavy tidings from the Lord for you that are impenitent. This book is not a book to play with, it is full of the terrors of the Lord against such as go on in rebellion against him. Perhaps you have been made to tremble as you have read your Bible, and have seen how the Lord pronounces a solemn curse against the man that goeth on in his iniquity.

But the correction may also have come to you from *your own conscience*, quickened by the Word of God. You have come to be uneasy, you start in your sleep with dreams that alarm you. If you are as I once was, everything you look upon seems to have a mouth to accuse you. I remember when the Lord's corrections were very heavy upon me. I could not see a funeral but what I wondered when I too should be carried to the grave; I could not pass a churchyard without the reflection that I should soon be there; and when I heard the passing bell, it seemed to tell me that I should soon be judged, and condemned, for I had no hope of pardon. These are corrections of God, and I pray you regard them.

Possibly, however, you have endured *affliction*. You are not well; you have been made to look into eternity through death's door. Peradventure one or another of your friends has been taken home. You wear the garb of mourning now. God has corrected you. You have had a loss which you thought you could scarce survive, it was so severe. "Despise not thou the chastening of the Lord," but hear his rod, and listen to what he has to say to you in it. Remember, God may smite you worse than he has done; for these few aches and pains he can send something more sharp and smarting. If one child has gone, he can take another, even from your breast; if one relative has died, another may follow, for the great archer hath many arrows in his quiver, and when one sufficeth not he speedily wings another in its painful flight. I pray thee beware, and let it not be said of thee, "She received not correction," or, "He received not correction"; but may you be willing to listen while God is thus dealing with you.

This leads to a third count, in which lies the very essence of deadly sin: "*She trusted not in the Lord.*" She would not come and trust in Christ for salvation; she would believe in her own righteousness. She would not trust in Christ to help her to overcome sin, she said she was quite able to purify herself. Oh, many a young man has started fair for heaven to all appearance, but it has been in his own strength, and, like Pliable, he has no sooner stumbled into the Slough of Despond than he has turned his back on the heavenly city, and returned to the place from which he set out. Beware, I pray you, of having anything to do with a hope that is not based upon trust in God in Christ Jesus. Your religion is vanity, and an insult to high heaven, unless it be based on the atonement of Jesus Christ. Where there is no faith in Jesus peace is presumption. He that dares to hope till he has believed in Christ hopes in vain. But ah, there are some who are driven to do many apparently gracious things, but yet this one thing they will not do, they will not trust in the Lord; and I have known this to be sadly the case with some in great affliction. She did not trust in the Lord: she was a widow, but she did not trust in the Lord. She had many

little children, she knew not where to find them bread, but she did not trust in the Lord. She was sick and ill herself, but she trusted not in the Lord. She was laid at death's door, she was in the infirmary, in the hospital, but she trusted not in the Lord. Her heart was very heavy, and she said she wished she could die, but she trusted not in the Lord. Her friends did not help her: those who ought to have been kind were cruel, but she trusted not in the Lord: she was driven into a corner, and yet she did not trust in the Lord.

Ay, but this is a great sin, for surely God takes away our props and dependences on purpose that we may throw our whole weight on himself; but there are some who will have nothing to do with this trusting, neither for time nor for eternity, neither for body nor for soul. Woe unto any man, be he even a child of God, if he once gets off the pathway of faith, for when we walk by sight we shall see things which shall make us wish we were blind, and only when we trust shall we have to say, "I am not confounded nor ashamed, nor shall I be, world without end." This is sad—"She trusted not in the Lord."

The fourth crime was, "*She drew not near to her God.*" There was no prayer. There was much talk about her trouble, much talk about what she would like to do, but there was no asking of God, no going into the chamber and spreading the case before him, and pleading his mercy. There was no thought of God; the mind did not get near to him. The desires rambled round in a thousand devious paths, but did not come to God. Oh, it is hard to get some of you to think of God. I try and preach as best I can, and try to find striking words to make you think of God, but, oh, how often do I fail! The choicest ways I use defeat themselves. May it not be so now! Let it not be said of you any longer that "she drew not near to her God." We ought to think of him, we ought to seek him, we ought to come to him, as little chicks, when there is a hawk in the air, and they hear the call of the mother hen, soon hide away under her feathers. We ought to run in prayer, that it might be true of us, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." If you had a child that in its troubles ran out into the street, and when its little heart was heavy went away to strangers, and never told father or mother its sorrow, you would feel much hurt. This is God's quarrel with his rebellious people, that they will go to Satan himself before they will come to him. Nay, think not that I run too far, and use an extravagant expression, for Saul did this; when God answered him not, he offered no penitent petitions, but resorted to a witch for help. Many would penetrate into the recesses of the unseen world, and tamper with spiritual mysteries sooner than they will go to God. Silly women will believe a fortune teller, but will not trust the Saviour.

Is it so with any of you? Then let this word of accusation sink deep into your spirits, and confess your transgression unto the Lord.

Putting the four sentences together: "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to God,"—what then? Why, "*woe unto her.*" Read the first verse of the chapter, and there you have it. As I was coming here that word "woe," "woe," "woe" seemed to ring in my ears, and I

wondered where it came from. I will tell you. It is a word that goes to be made into a worse word. Let me pronounce it for you—woe; and that leads to something woe-erse—worse; and to the woe-erst—the worst of all. It is bad, lamentable, destructive, ruinous, painful, wretched, miserable woe, worse, worst. I wish I could pronounce the word as my Master did when he said, “Woe unto thee, Bethsaida; woe unto thee, Chorasin; woe unto thee, Capernaum.” I should hardly like to say as he did, for he had a right to judge which I have not—“Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites,” and so on. But that “woe” as he pronounced it must have sounded terribly, softly, sadly, sternly piercing to the heart. Ah, how will the angels sound it at the last? Hear it now, lest ye hear it at the last. “One woe is past, and behold another woe cometh,” when the Judge of all the earth shall break the seals and pour out the vials, and the ungodly sons of men shall see the star Wormwood, and shall drink of the bitterness of the wrath of God. Woe. It means sorrow here! No rest! No satisfaction! Woe, woe, even at this day unto the man that trusteth not in God. But what it meaneth in the next world—to be driven from the face of Christ, to be followed with a “woe” which shall have eternal echoes, Woe, woe, woe! I could fain stop and cry with Mr. Whitefield, “The wrath to come! The wrath to come!” Escape from it while yet life lasts and Jesus pleads with you, for otherwise this shall fall like a thunderbolt from the hand of the angry Judge,—“Woe to her. She obeyed not the voice, she received not correction, she trusted not in the Lord, she drew not near to God.” Then all this will turn to woe, the voice disregarded will ring again, “Son, remember! Son, remember! Woe, woe.” As for the correction which was disregarded, oh how light and gentle it will seem compared with the strokes that will then fall upon the rejecters of Christ! Every correction will then turn to woe. And the not trusting in the Saviour, the unbelief, what woe that will bring! The not drawing near to God, what woe that will cost, when we shall see ourselves afar off, and between us and God a great gulf fixed, so that none can come to us, no, not so much as to bring a drop of water to cool our tongue, neither can any go from us, or escape from the place of woe.

II. To help any who would escape from this woe, I shall spend a minute in noticing THE FOUR HIDDEN CONSOLATIONS WHICH LIE IN THIS TEXT.

I do not intend to enlarge upon them, because I want the previous part of this discourse to abide in your mind: but there are four hidden consolations. The first is, if I have not obeyed his voice yet, it is plain *he does speak*, he speaks to me. My soul, my soul, God is not dumb; canst thou be deaf? Still doth he invite thee, still doth he call thee, still doth his good Spirit strive with thee. This voice of mine to-night I hope will be God’s voice to some of you. Be encouraged; he has not given you up, but still calls. When the sentence of death is pronounced there are no warnings given, and since you are having another call, I would encourage you to hope.

The next is, “She received not correction,” then *all my troubles and afflictions are meant to bring me to Christ*. They are all sent in love to my soul, and I ought to look at them as such. My friend, where are you? I do not know where you are, or to whom I am speaking, but

I do pray you see that God, who seemeth to have dealt very hardly with you, is only driving you to mercy. His voice has been harsh, and his hand has been heavy, but in love he corrects you. Oh listen to him, come to him. A judge does not correct a criminal doomed to die. God does not correct a soul, with a view to its reclamation, if he has given it up altogether.

Notice the next sentence. "She trusted not in the Lord." Is it a crime, then, that I did not trust in the Lord? *Then I may trust him*, and I *will*, for that which it is a sin not to do I must have a right to do, and if it be laid to my charge, "She trusteth not in the Lord," oh, sweet mercy, sweet mercy, I may trust! This is why the Scripture saith, "He that believeth not shall be damned," as if to assure you that you certainly *may* believe, because you will be damned if you do not. Come, then, and let even the black side of the text wear a smile to you, and lead you to trust your God, since he blames you for not doing so.

Then there was the last crime. "She drew not near to God." What, then, does God make it a fault, that I do not draw near to him? Oh, I wish the Spirit of God would put it into your heart to say, "That shall not be my fault any longer."

"I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose sceptre pardon gives;
Perhaps he may command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives."

"I thought I might not come," but now I see I am condemned for not coming; then I will come. I will delay no longer, I will come to Jesus, determined that if I perish I will perish at his feet. Have hope, my friend, for none did ever perish there. May God set his seal to this word of exhortation, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Zephaniah iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—515, 509, 514.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SILVER SOCKETS: OR, REDEMPTION THE FOUNDATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the Lord. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the Lord. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls. And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls."—Exodus xxx. 11—16.

"A bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket."—Exodus xxxviii. 26—27.

WILL you kindly first open your Bibles at Exodus xxx.; for I must commence my discourse by expounding that passage. When the account was taken of the number of the children of Israel the Lord commanded that every male over twenty years of age should pay half a shekel as redemption money, confessing that he deserved to die, owning that he was in debt to God, and bringing the sum demanded as a type of a great redemption which would by-and-by be paid for the souls of the sons of men. The truth was thus taught that God's people are a redeemed people: they are elsewhere called "the redeemed of the Lord." If men reject the redemption which he ordains, then are they not his people; for of all his chosen it may be said—"The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." Whenever we attempt to number up the people of God it is absolutely needful that we count only those who at least profess to have brought the redemption price in their hands, and so to have taken part in the atonement of Christ Jesus. David, when he numbered the people, did not gather from them the redemption money, and hence a plague broke out amongst them. He had failed in obedience to the Lord's ordinance, and counted his subjects, not as redeemed people, but merely as so many heads. Let us always beware of estimating the number of Christians by the number of the population of the countries called Christian; for the only true Christians in the world are those who are redeemed

must they be redeemed or die. Rank could not save the princes, nor office spare the elders: every man of Israel must be redeemed; and no man could pass the muster-roll without his half shekel, whatever he might say, or do, or be. God was their God because he had redeemed them out of the house of bondage, and they were his people because he had "put a redemption between his people and the Egyptians." Well did David ask, "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself?"

Note well that every Israelitish man must be *alike redeemed*, and redeemed with the like, nay, with the same redemption. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel." Every man requires redemption, the one as well as the other. Kings on their thrones must be redeemed as well as prisoners in their dungeons; the philosopher must be redeemed as well as the peasant; the preacher as much as the profligate, and the moralist as certainly as the prostitute or the thief. The redemption money for every person must be the same, for all have sinned and are in like condemnation.

And it must be *a redemption that meets the divine demand*, because, you see, the Lord not only says that they must each bring half a shekel, no more, no less, but it must be "the shekel of the sanctuary,"—not the shekel of commerce, which might be debased in quality or diminished by wear and tear, but the coin must be according to the standard shekel laid up in the holy place. To make sure of it Moses defines exactly how much a shekel was worth, and what its weight was,—“A shekel is twenty gerahs.” So you must bring to God the redemption which he has appointed,—the blood and righteousness of Christ,—nothing more, nothing less. The ransom of Christ is perfection, and from it there must be no varying. The price must satisfy the Divine demand, and that to the full.

Note that the price appointed did effectually redeem so far as the type could go. Some rejoice in a redemption which does not redeem; for the general redemption by which all men are supposed to be redeemed leaves multitudes in bondage, and they go to hell despite this kind of redemption. Therefore do we preach a particular and special redemption of God's own chosen and believing people: these are effectually and really ransomed, and the precious price once paid for them has set them free, neither shall any plague of vengeance smite them, for the redemption money has procured them eternal deliverance.

This type is full of instruction: the more it is studied the richer will it appear. Every man that is numbered among the children of Israel, and permitted to serve God by going out to war, or to take upon him the duties of citizenship, must, as he is numbered, be redeemed. So must every one of us, if we are truly God's people and God's servants, find our right to be so in the fact of our redemption by Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the joy and glory of each one of us: "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

Now we turn to the second of our texts, and there we learn a very remarkable fact. In the thirty-eighth chapter, verse twenty-five, we find that this mass of silver which was paid, whereby six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men were redeemed, each one paying his half shekel, came to a great weight of silver. It must have weighed

smelting three four times, and this was dedicated to the use of the tabernacle: the special application of the precious metal was to make sockets for the boards which made the walls of the tabernacle should be moved. The mass of silver made up one hundred talents, and these supported the fifty boards of the holy place. They were in a wilderness, constantly moving, and continually shifting the tabernacle. Now, they might have been set a foundation in the sand, or on coming to a piece of rock where they could not dig, they might have cut out foundations with their axes; but the Lord appointed that they should carry the foundation of the tabernacle with them. A talent of silver, weighing, I suppose, about one hundred pounds, was either formed into the shape of a wedge, or was to be driven into the soil, or else made into a square or plate to lie upon it. In the wedge or plate were made two sockets into which the tenons of the boards could be readily fitted. The two pieces of silver fitted the one into the other, tenon and mortise were made, and thus they made a compact parallelogram, strengthened at the corners with double plates, and formed one foundation, moveable when taken to pieces, yet very secure as a whole. *This foundation was made of the redemption money.* See the instructive emblem! The foundation of the worship of Israel was redemption. The dwelling-place of the Lord their God was founded on atonement. All the structure of incorruptible wood and precious gold stood upon the redemption money, and the curtains of fine linen, and the veil of matchless workmanship, and the whole structure rested on nothing else but the silver mass of silver which had been paid as the redemption money of the people. There was only one exception, and that was at the door where was the entrance to the holy place. There the pillars were set upon sockets of brass, perhaps because, as there was much going in and out of the priests, it was not meet that they should tread upon the money of redemption. The blood of the paschal Lamb, when Israel came out of Egypt, was sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts; but out of reverence to that blood it was not to be sprinkled on the threshold. Everything was done to show that atonement is to be the previous foundation of all holy things, and everything to prevent a slighting or disregard of it. Wee unto that man of whom it shall ever be said, "He hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

I do not for a moment bring before you the type of the text as a proof of doctrine; but I intend to use it simply as an illustration. It seems to me to be a very striking, full, and suggestive emblem, setting forth most clearly certain precious truths. I feel I am quite safe in using this illustration, because it is one among a group of acknowledged types, and could not have been given without a reason. I do not see why they could not have made the foundation sockets of iron, or why they could not have been content with tent pins and cords as in other cases of tent building; I see no reason in the necessity of the case why they must be sockets of silver; there must have been another reason. Why was that particular silver prescribed? Why must the redemption money be used, and nothing else? Surely there is teaching here if we

see it.

Moreover, this does not stand alone; for when the Tabernacle was succeeded by the Temple redemption was still conspicuous in the foundation. What was the foundation of the Temple? It was the rock of Mount Moriah. And what was the hill of Moriah but the place where in many lights redemption and atonement had been set forth. It was there that Abraham drew the knife to slay Isaac: a fair picture of the Father offering up his Son. It was there the ram was caught in the thicket and was killed instead of Isaac: fit emblem of the Substitute accepted instead of man. Later still, it was on Mount Moriah that the angel, when David attempted to number the people without redemption money, stood with his sword drawn. There David offered sacrifices and burnt offerings. The offering was accepted and the angel sheathed his sword—another picture of that power of redemption by which mercy rejoices against judgment. And there the Lord uttered the memorable sentence, "It is enough, stay now thine hand." This "enough" is the crown of redemption. Even as the Great Sacrifice himself said, "It is finished," so does the Great Acceptor of the sacrifice say, "enough." What a place of redemption was the hill of Zion! Now, if the temple was built on a mount which must have been specially selected because there the types of redemption were most plentiful, I feel that without an apology I may boldly take this first fact that the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness was based and grounded upon redemption money, and use it for our instruction. With this much of preface we will now fall to and feed upon the spiritual meal which is set before us. O for grace to feast upon the heavenly bread that we may grow thereby. Spirit of the living God, be pleased to help us in this matter.

I. First, I want you to view this illustration as teaching us something about **GOD IN RELATION TO MAN**. The tent in the wilderness was typical of God's coming down to man to hold intercourse with him: the fiery cloudy pillar visible outside, and the bright light of the shekinah, visible to him who was called to enter once a year into the innermost sanctuary, shining over the mercy-seat,—these were the tokens of the special presence of the Deity in the centre of the camp of Israel. The Lord seems to teach us, in relation to his dealing with men, that *he will meet man in the way of grace only on the footing of redemption*. He treats with man concerning love and grace within his holy shrine; but the basis of that shrine must be atonement. Rest assured, dear friends, that there is no meeting with God on our part except through Jesus Christ our Redeemer. I am of Luther's mind when he said, "I will have nothing to do with an absolute God." God out of Christ is a terror to us. Even in Christ, remember, he is a consuming fire, for even "our God is a consuming fire"; but what he must be out of Christ may none of us ever know.

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.

"But if Immanuel's face appear,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."

You must not attempt to have audience with God at first upon the footing of election. It were presumptuous to attempt to come to the electing Father except through the atoning Son. "No man," saith Christ, "cometh to the Father but by me." Never attempt to speak with God on the footing of your own sanctification; for very soon you will come to bringing your legal righteousness before him, and that will provoke him. Always enter the holy place with the thought, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "Not without blood": recollect that! Into the holy place went the high priest once every year, "not without blood." There can be no coming of God to man on terms of peace except through the one great sacrifice: that must be the foundation of it all.

Nay, and not only God's coming to us, but *God's abiding with us is upon the same foundation*; for the tabernacle was, so to speak, the house of God,—the place where God especially dwelt among his people, as he said: "I will dwell in them, and walk in them." But he never dwelt among them in anything but in a tent that was based upon the silver of the redemption money; and you, dear friend, if you have ever walked with God, can only maintain your fellowship by resting where you did at first, as a poor sinner redeemed by your Saviour. They have asked me to rise sometimes to a higher platform, and come to God as a sanctified person. Yes, but a rock, though it may be lower than the little wooden stage which some erect upon it, is safer to stand upon; and I do believe that those who walk with God, according to their attainments, and imaginary perfections, have climbed up to a rotten stage, which will fall under them ere long. I know no mode of standing before God to day but that which I had at first. I am unworthy still in myself, but accepted in the Beloved! Guilty in myself, and lost and ruined; but still received, blessed, and loved, because of the person and work of Christ. The Lord cannot dwell with you, my dear friend, you will soon have broken fellowship and be in the dark, if you attempt to walk with him because you feel sanctified, or because you have been active in his service, or because you know much, or because you are an experienced believer. No! no! no! The Lord will only abide with us in that tabernacle whose every board is resting upon the silver foundation of redemption by his own dear Son.

There can, beloved, be no sort of *communion* between God and us except through the atonement. Do you want to pray? You cannot speak with God except through Jesus Christ. Do you wish to praise? You cannot bring the censur full of smoking incense except through Christ. It is only within those foundations of silver that you can speak to God, or hear him speak comfortably with you. Would you hear a voice out of the excellent glory? Do you pray that the great Father would speak with you as with his dear children? Expect it through Jesus Christ, for "through him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Even unto the Father, though we be children, we have not access except through Jesus. The tabernacle of communion even to him that lives nearest to God must be built upon the redemption price. Free grace and dying love must be the golden bells which ring upon our garments when we go into the holy place to speak with the Most High.

The tabernacle was the place of *holy service*, where the priests all day long offered sacrifices of one kind and another unto the Most High.

And you and I serve God as priests, for he has made us a royal priesthood. But how and where can we exercise our priesthood? Everywhere as to this world; but before God, the foundation of the temple wherein we stand, and the ground of the acceptance of our priesthood, is redemption. The priests offered their sacrifice not in groves of man's planting, or on high hills, which were the natural strength of the land, but within the space marked out by the silver slabs of atonement money; and so must we worship and serve within redemption lines. If we come under the idea of legal merit, and suppose that there is a natural goodness in our prayers, or in our praises, in our observances of Christian ceremonies, or in almsgiving, or in zealous testimony, we make a great mistake, and we shall never be so accepted. We must bring our offerings unto that court which is fenced about by the foundation most precious which God has laid of old, even the merit of his dear Son. We are accepted in the Beloved, and in no other manner; we are shut in within the foundation which Christ has laid of old, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with his own most precious blood.

Thus much, dear brethren, upon one view of this subject. May you learn much of God in his relation to man while you meditate thereon at your leisure and are taught of the Holy Ghost.

II. I think we may, in the second place, apply this illustration to **CHRIST IN HIS DIVINE PERSON.** The Tabernacle was the type of our Lord Jesus Christ, for God dwells among men in Christ. "He tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory," says the apostle. God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building; but the Temple of God is Christ Jesus, "in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Our Lord is thus the Tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man; and *our first and fundamental idea of him must be in his character as Redeemer.* Our Lord does come to us in other characters, and in them all he is right glorious; but unless we receive him as Redeemer we have missed the essence of his character, the foundation idea of him. As the tent in the wilderness was founded upon the redemption money, so our idea and conception of Christ must be first of all that "he is the propitiation for our sins;" and I say this, though it may seem unnecessary to say it, because Satan is very crafty, and he leads many from plain truth by subtle means. I remember a sister, who had been a member of a certain denomination, who was converted to God in this place, though she had been a professed Christian for years. She said to me "I have hitherto believed only in Christ crucified: I worshipped him as about to come in the second Advent to reign with his people, but I never had a sense of guilt, neither did I go to him as putting away my sin; and hence I was not saved." When she began to see herself as a sinner she found her need of a Redeemer. Atonement must enter into our first and chief idea of the Lord Jesus. "We preach Christ *crucified*": we preach him glorified, and delight to do so; but still the main point upon which the eye of a sinner must rest, if he would have peace with God, must be Christ crucified for sin. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Do, then, my dear hearer, let the very foundation of your faith in Christ be your view of him as ransoming you from the power of sin and Satan. Some say they admire

Christ as an example, and well they may; they can never find a better; but Jesus Christ will never be truly known and followed if he be viewed only as an example, for he is infinitely more than that. Neither can any man carry out the project of being like Christ, unless he first knows him as making atonement for sin, and as giving power to overcome sin through his blood. Some writers have looked upon Christ from one point of view and some from another, and there is no book that is more likely to sell than a Life of Christ, but the most essential view of him is to be had from the cross foot. No complete life of Christ has been written yet. All the lives of Christ that have yet been written amount to about one drop of broth, while the four Evangelists are as a whole bullock. The pen of inspiration has accomplished what all the quills in the world will never be able to do again, and there is no need they should. However much we dwell upon the holiness of our Lord, we cannot complete his picture unless we describe him as the sinner's ransom. He is white, but he is ruddy too. Rutherford said, "O then, come and see if he be not a red man. In his suffering for us he was wet with his own blood. Is he not well worthy of your love?" When he cometh forth in the vesture dipped in blood many shun him, they cannot bear the atoning sacrifice; but he is never in our eyes so matchlessly lovely as when we see him bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and putting away transgression by making himself the Substitute for his people.

Let this then be your basis idea of Christ—"he has redeemed us from the curse of the law." Indeed, in reference to Christ, we must regard his redemption as the basis of his triumphs and his glory—"the sufferings of Christ and the glory that shall follow." We cannot understand any work that he has performed unless we understand his vicarious sacrifice. Christ is a lock without a key, he is a labyrinth without a clue, until you know him as the Redeemer. You have spilt the letters on the floor, and you cannot make out the character of the Wonderful till first you have learned to spell the words—atonement by blood. This is the deepest joy of earth and the grandest song in heaven. "For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

I beg you to observe, in connection with our text, that as the foundation of the Tabernacle was very valuable, so our Lord Jesus as our Redeemer is *exceedingly precious to us*. His redemption is made with his precious blood. The redemption money was of pure and precious metal, a metal that does not lose weight in the fire. "The redemption of the soul is precious." What a redemption price hath Christ given for us; yea, what a redemption price he is! Well did Peter say, "Unto you that believe he is precious": silver and gold are not to be mentioned in comparison with him. To me it is very instructive that the Israelites should have been redeemed with silver in the form of half-shekels, because there are many who say, "These old-fashioned divines believe in the mercantile idea of the atonement." Exactly so: we always did and always shall use a metaphor which is so expressive as to be abhorred by the enemies of the truth. The mercantile idea of the atonement is the Biblical idea of the atonement. These people were redeemed, not with lumps of uncoined silver, but with money used in commerce. Paul saith "Ye are not your own: ye are bought"—listen—"with a price"—to give us the mercantile

idea beyond all question. "Bought with a price" is doubly mercantile. What say you to this, ye wise refiners, who would refine the meaning out of the word of the Lord? Such persons merely use this expression about the "mercantile idea" as a cheap piece of mockery, because in their hearts they hate atonement altogether, and the idea of substitution and expiation by vicarious sacrifice is abhorrent to them. Therefore hath the Lord made it so plain, so manifest that they may stumble at this stumbling-stone, "whereunto also," methinks, as Peter saith, "they were appointed." To us, at any rate, the redemption price which is the foundation of all is exceedingly precious.

But there is one other thing to recollect in reference to Christ, namely, that *we must each one view him as our own*, for out of all the grown up males that were in the camp of Israel, when they set up the tabernacle, there was not one but had a share in its foundation. We read in Exodus xxxv. 25 and 26, "And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats' hair." The men could not spin, perhaps; they did not understand that art; but every man had his half a shekel in the foundation. I want you to think of that. Each believer has a share in Christ as his redemption: nay, I dare not say a share in him, for he is all mine, and he is all yours. Brother and sister, have you by faith laid hold upon a whole Christ and said, "He has paid the price for me"? Then you have an interest in the very fundamental idea of Christ. Perhaps you are not learned enough to have enjoyed your portion in certain other aspects of our Lord; but if you are a believer, however weak you are, though you are like the poor among the people of Israel, you have your half shekel in the foundation. I delight to think of that. I have my treasure in Christ; "my Beloved is mine." Do you say he is yours? I do not deny it. So he is, but "he is mine." If you deny that fact we will quarrel at once, for I do aver that "my Beloved is mine." Moreover, by his purchase "I am his." "So am I," say you. Quite right: I am glad you are; but I know that "I am his." There is nothing like getting a firm, personal hold and grip of Christ: my half shekel is in the basis of the tabernacle; my redemption money is in the divinely glorious building of grace; my redemption is in the death of Christ, which is the foundation of all.

III. Time fails me, and yet I have now a third thought to lay before you very briefly. The tabernacle was a type of THE CHURCH OF GOD as the place of divine indwelling. What and where is the church of God? The true church is founded upon redemption. Every board of shittim wood was tenoned and mortised into the sockets of silver made of the redemption money, and every man that is in the church of God is united to Christ, rests upon Christ, and cannot be separated from him. If that is not true of you, my dear hearer, you are not in the church of God. You may be in the church of England or of Rome, you may be in this church or some other; but unless you are joined to Christ, and he is the sole foundation upon which you rest, you are not in the church of God. You may be in no visible church whatever, and yet, if you are resting upon Christ, you are a part of the true house of God on earth.

Christ is a sure foundation for the church; for the tabernacle was

never blown down. It had no foundation but the talents of silver; and yet it braved every desert storm. The wilderness is a place of rough winds—it is called a howling wilderness; but the sockets of silver held the boards upright, and the holy tent defied the rage of the elements. To be united to Christ by faith is to be built on a sure foundation. His church will never be overthrown let the devil send what hurricanes he may.

And it was *an invariable foundation*, for the tabernacle always had the same basis whenever it was placed. One day it was pitched on the sand, another on a good piece of arable ground, a third time on a grass plot, and sometimes on a bare rock; but it always had the same foundation. The bearers of the holy furniture never left the silver sockets behind. Those four tons of silver were carried in their waggons, and put out first as the one and only foundation of the holy place. Now, the learned tell us that the nineteenth century requires "advanced thought." I wish the nineteenth century was over; I have heard it bragged about so much that I am sick of the nineteenth century. We are told that this is too sensible a century to need or accept the same gospel as the first, second, and third centuries. Yet these were the centuries of martyrs, the centuries of heroes, the centuries that conquered all the gods of Greece and Rome, the centuries of holy glory, and all this because they were the centuries of the gospel; but now we are so enlightened that our ears ache for something fresh, and under the influence of another gospel, which is not another, our beliefs are dwindling down from alps to anthills, and we ourselves from giants to pigmies. You will want a microscope soon to see Christian faith in the land, it is getting to be so small and scarce. By God's grace some of us abide by the ark of the covenant, and mean to preach the same gospel which the saints received at the first. We shall imitate those who, having had a silver foundation at the first, had a silver foundation for the tabernacle, even till they came to the promised land. It is a foundation that we dare not change. It must be the same, world without end, for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

IV. Fourthly, and lastly, I think this tabernacle in the wilderness may be viewed as a type of **THE GOSPEL**, for the gospel is the revelation of God to man. The tent in the wilderness was the gospel according to Moses. Now, as that old gospel in the wilderness was, such must ours be, and I want to say just two or three things very plainly, and have done.

Redemption, atonement in the mercantile idea, must be *the foundation of our theology—doctrinal, practical, and experimental*. As to doctrine, they say a fish stinks first at the head, and men first go astray in their brains. When once there is anything wrong in your belief as to redemption you are wrong all through. I believe in the old rhyme—

"What think you of Christ? is the test
To try both your state and your scheme,
You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of HIM."

If you get wrong on atonement you have turned a switch which will run the whole train of your thoughts upon the wrong line. You must know Christ as the Redeemer of his people, and their substitute, or your

teaching will give an uncertain sound. As redemption must be the foundation of doctrinal divinity, so it must of practical divinity. "Ye are not your own: ye are bought with a price," must be the source of holiness, and the reason for consecration. The man that does not feel himself to be specially "redeemed from among men" will see no reason for being different from other men. "Christ loved his Church and gave himself for it;" he who sees no special giving of Christ for his Church will see no special reason why the Church should give herself to Christ.

Certainly redemption must be the foundation of experimental theology; for what is an experience worth that does not make us every day prize more and more the redeeming blood? Oh, my dear friends, I never knew, though I had some idea of it, what a fool I was till of late years. I tell you that those dreadful pains, which may even make you long for death, will empty you right out, and not only empty you, but make you judge yourself to be a hollow sham, and cause you to loathe yourself, and then it is that you cling to Christ. Nothing but the atoning sacrifice will satisfy me. I have read plenty of books of modern theology, but none of them can heal so much as a pin's prick in the conscience. When a man gets sick in body and heavy in spirit he wants the old-fashioned puritanical theology, the gospel of Calvin, the gospel of Augustine, the gospel of Paul, the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our theology as a matter of experience must be based upon redemption.

Ah, brethren, and not only our theology but *our personal hope*. The only gospel that I have to preach is that which I rest upon myself:—"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," "For the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed": "He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Oh, dear hearers, build on that and you will never fail; but if you do not take Christ's redemption as the foundation of your hope—I do not care who you are—you may be very learned, but you know nothing at all. The Lord make you to know that you know nothing, and then you will know something: and when you have learned as much as that, may he teach you the redemption of his Son, and reveal Christ in you.

This, beloved, is henceforth *the burden of our service, and the glory of our life*. Those silver sockets were very precious, but very weighty. I dare say the men who had to move them sometimes thought so. Four tons and more of silver make up a great load. O blessed, blissful draught, to have to put the shoulder to the collar to draw the burden of the Lord—the glorious weight of redemption. My soul, blessed art thou to be made a labouring ox for Christ; ever to be bearing among this people the divinely precious load of the foundation which Christ has laid for his people. You, young brethren, that preach, mind you always carry your four tons of silver: preach a full and rich redemption all of you. You who go to the Sunday School, do not let the children have a place to live in that has no foundation: the first wind will blow it over, and where will they be? Left naked under the ruins of that in which they had hoped. Lay Christ for a foundation. You cannot do better, for God himself has said, "Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious." Lay this silver foundation wherever you are.

Aye, but though the ingots were heavy to carry, every Israelite felt

proud to think that that tabernacle had a foundation of silver. You Amalekites out there cannot see the silver footing of it all ; you Moabites cannot perceive it. All you can see is the badger skins outside,—the rough exterior of the tent. You say, "That tent is a poor place to be a temple : that gospel is a very simple affair." No doubt it is to you, but you never saw the silver sockets, you never saw the golden boards, you never saw the glory of the inside of the place lit up by the seven-branched candlesticks, and glorious with the presence of God. Brethren, redemption is our honour and delight.

" In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time :
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime."

This the first and this the last ; the bleeding Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, and yet living and reigning when earth's foundations shall dissolve. That blessed Lamb of God is in the midst of the throne, and his people shall all be with him, for ever triumphant. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the foundation and the headstone. O Saviour of sinners, glory be to thy name. Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Peter ii., 1—10 ;
Exodus xxvi. 15—25 ; xxx. 11—16 ; xxxviii. 25—28.

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THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is joy.”—Galatians v. 22.

OBSERVE, “the *fruit* of the Spirit,” for the product of the Spirit of God is one. As some fruits are easily divisible into several parts, so you perceive that the fruit of the Spirit, though it be but one, is three-fold, nay, it makes three times three,—“love, joy, peace; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness; faith, meekness, temperance,”—all one. Perhaps “love” is put first not only because it is a right royal virtue, nearest akin to the divine perfection, but because it is a comprehensive grace, and contains all the rest. All the commandments are fulfilled in one word, and that word is “love”; and all the fruits of the Spirit are contained in that one most sweet, most blessed, most heavenly, most God-like grace of love. See that ye abound in love to the great Father and all his family, for if you fail in the first point how can you succeed in the second? Above all things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. As for joy, if it be not the first product of the Spirit of God, it is next to the first, and we may be sure that the order in which it is placed by the inspired apostle is meant to be instructive. The fruit of the Spirit is love first, as comprehensive of the rest; then joy arising out of it. It is remarkable that joy should take so eminent a place; it attaineth unto the first three, and is but one place lower than the first. Look at it in its high position, and if you have missed it, or if you have depreciated it, revise your judgment, and endeavour with all your heart to attain to it, for depend upon it this fruit of the Spirit is of the utmost value. This morning, as I can only speak upon one theme, I leave *love* for another occasion, and treat only of joy. May its divine author, the Holy Ghost, teach us how to speak of it to our profit and his own glory.

It is quite true that the Spirit of God produces sorrow, for one of his first effects upon the soul is holy grief. He enlightens us as to our lost condition, convincing us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and the first result upon our heart is astonishment and lamentation. Even when we look to Christ by the work of the Spirit one of the first fruits

is sorrow: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, and be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." But this sorrow is not the ultimate object of the Spirit's work, it is a means to an end. Even as the travail of the mother leadeth up to the joy of birth, so do the pangs of repentance lead up to the joy of pardon and acceptance. The sorrow is, to use a scriptural figure, the blade, but the full corn in the ear is joy; sorrow helps on the fruit, but the fruit itself is joy. The tears of godly grief for sin are all meant to sparkle into the diamonds of joy in pardoning love.

This teaches us, then, that we are not to look upon bondage as being the object of the work of the Spirit of God, or the design of the Lord in a work of grace. Many are under bondage to the law: they attempt to keep the commands of God, not out of love, but from slavish fear. They dread the lash of punishment, and tremble like slaves; but to believers it is said "Ye are not under the law, but under grace," and "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." To be in bondage under the law, to be afraid of being cast away by God, and visited with destruction on account of sin after we have trusted in Jesus,—this is not the work of the Spirit of God in believers, but the black offspring of unbelief or ignorance of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Neither is a painful dread or a servile terror a fruit of the Spirit. Many worship even the Lord Jesus himself at a distance: they know not that believers are "a people near unto him." They are afraid of God, but they never delight in him; they attend to worship, not because they rejoice in it, but because they think it must be done. Their secret feeling is—"What a weariness it is," but necessity compels. They know nothing of a child's joy in sure and full forgiveness, spoken by the Father's own lips as he pressed them to his bosom. His kiss was never warm upon their cheek, the ring was never on their finger, nor the best robe upon their shoulder; the music and the dancing of the joyous family, who are in harmony with the father's joy over the lost son, have never charmed their ears. They are still under dread, which is the fruit of superstition rather than "the fruit of the Spirit." Many things they do and suffer, and all in vain: if the Son did but make them free they would be free indeed.

I know some whom I am very far from despising, but whom on the contrary I greatly value, whose religion, sincere as I know it is, is sadly tinged with gloomy colours. They are afraid of assurance, for they dread presumption: they dare not speak of their own salvation with the certainty with which the Bible saints were wont to speak of it; they always say "I hope" and "I trust." They would seem to be total abstainers from joy; they are suspicious of it lest it should be carnal excitement or visionary hope. They hang their heads like bulrushes, and go mourning all their days, as if the religion of Christ knew no higher festival than a funeral, and all its robes were the garments of despair. Brethren, despondency is not the fruit of the Spirit. Make no mistake: depression is frequently the fruit of indigestion, or of satanic temptation, or of unbelief, or of some harboured sin, but "the fruit of the Spirit is joy." Constantly looking within your own self

instead of looking alone to Christ is enough to breed misery in any heart. I have also known gloomy expressions to be the fruit of affectation, the fruit of the unwise imitation of some undoubtedly good person who was of a downcast spirit. Some of the best of men have had a melancholy turn, but they would have been better men if this had been overcome. Imitate their many virtues: take the pot of ointment and pick out the dead fly. O my brethren, look well to it that ye bring forth the genuine, holy, sacred, delicious fruit of the Spirit, which in one of its forms is "joy." Do not covet the counterfeit of earthly joy, but seek to the good Spirit to bear the true fruit in you.

I. In speaking upon this joy I shall notice, first, the fact that IT IS BROUGHT FORTH. Brethren, the Spirit of God is not barren: if he be in you he must and will inevitably produce his own legitimate fruit, and "the fruit of the Spirit is joy."

We know this to be the fact because *we ourselves are witnesses of it*. Joy is our portion, and we are cheered and comforted in the Saviour. "What!" say you, "are we not depressed and sorrowful at times?" Yea, verily; and yet what Christian man or woman among us would make an exchange with the gayest of all worldlings? Your lot is somewhat hard, my brother, and sometimes your spirit sinks within you; but do you not count yourself to be, even at your worst, happier than the worldling at his best? Come, would you not take your poverty, even with your mourning, rather than accept his wealth with all his hilarity, and give up your hope in God? I am persuaded you would: you would not change your blest estate for a monarch's crown. Well, then, that which you would not change is a good thing, and full of joy to your heart.

Brethren, we experience extraordinary joys at times. Some are of an equable temperament, and they are almost to be envied, for a stream of gentle joy always glides through their spirit. Others of us are of a more excitable character, and consequently we fall very flat at times. Ay, but then we have our high days and holidays, and mounting times, and then we outsoar the wings of eagles. Heaven itself can hardly know more ecstatic joy than we have occasionally felt; we shall be vessels of greater capacity there, but even here we are at times full to the brim of joy—I mean the same joy which makes heaven so glad. At times God is pleased to inundate the spirit with a flood of joy, and we are witnesses that "happy is the people whose God is the Lord." We do not dance before the ark every day, but when we do, our joy is such as no worldling can understand: it is far above and out of his sight.

Besides our own witness, the *whole history of the church goes to show that God's people are a joyful people*. I am sure that if in reading the history of the first Christian centuries you are asked to point out the men to be envied for their joy, you would point to the believers in Jesus. There is a room in Rome which is filled with the busts of the emperors. I have looked at their heads: they look like a collection of prizefighters and murderers, and scarcely could I discover on any countenance a trace of joy. Brutal passions and cruel thoughts deprived the lords of Rome of all chance of joy. There were honourable exceptions to this rule, but taking them all round you would look in vain for moral excellence among the Cæsars, and lacking this thing of beauty they missed that which is a joy. Turn now to the poor, hunted Christians, and read the

inscriptions left by them in the catacombs; they are so calm and peaceful that you say instinctively—a joyous people were wont to gather here. Those who have been most eminent in service and in suffering for Christ's sake have been of a triumphant spirit, dauntless because supported by an inner joy: their calm courage made them the wonder of the age. The true Christian is a different type of manhood from the self-indulgent tyrant; there is almost as much advance from the coarseness of vice to the beauty of holiness as there is from the chimpanzee to the man. I do not know how much Tiberias and Caligula and Nero used to sing; happy men they certainly were not. I can hardly imagine them singing, except at their drunken orgies, and then in the same tone as tigers growl; but I do know that Paul and Silas sang praises unto God with their feet in the stocks, and the prisoners heard them; and I know also that this was the mark of the Christians of the first age, that, when they assembled on the Lord's-day, it was not to groan, but to sing praises to the name of one Christos, whom they worshipped as a God. High joys were common then, when the bridegroom comforted his bride in the dens and caves of the earth. Those pioneers of our holy faith were destitute, afflicted, tormented, yet were they men of whom the world was not worthy, and men who counted it all joy to suffer persecution for Christ's sake. Now, if in the very worst times God's people have been a happy people, I am sure they are so now. I would appeal to the biographies of men of our own day, and challenge question as to the statement that their lives have been among the most desirable of human existences for they possessed a joy which cheered their sorrows, blessed their labours, sweetened their trials, and sustained them in the hour of death.

With some Christians this fruit of the Spirit is perpetual, or almost so. I do not doubt that many walk with God as Enoch did throughout the whole day of their life, always peaceful and joyful in the Lord. I have met with some, dear brethren and sisters, of that kind, whose breath has been praise, whose life has been song. How I envy them, and chide my own heart that I cannot always abide in their choice condition. It is to be accomplished, and we will press forward till we are "always rejoicing." But with others joy is not constant, and yet it is frequent. David had his mourning times, when tears were his meat day and night, and yet God was his exceeding joy. How thankful we ought to be for the portrait of David's inner self, which is presented to us in the Book of Psalms. With all his down-castings, what joys he had: David was, on the whole, a joyous man. His Book of Psalms has in it lyrics of delight; the gladdest hymns that ever leaped from human tongues. David is, I believe, the type of a great majority of the people of God, who if not "always rejoicing" are yet often so. Please to recollect that the utmost fulness of joy could hardly be enjoyed always in this mortal life. I believe that the human frame is not in this world capable of perpetual ecstasy. Look at the sun, but look not too long lest you be blinded by excess of light. Taste of honey, but eat not much of it, or it will no longer please the palate. Let your ear be charmed with the Halle-lujah chorus, but do not dream that you could endure its harmonies all the hours of the day; before long you would cry out for eloquent pauses, and sweet reliefs of silence. Too much even of delight will weary our

feeble hearts, and we shall need to come down from the mount. Our bodies require a portion of sleep, and that which is inevitable to the flesh has its likeness in the spirit; it must be quiet and still. I believe it is inevitable also, more or less, that the loftiest joy should be balanced by a sinking of heart. I do not say that depression is certain to follow delight, but usually some kind of faintness comes over the finite spirit after it has been lifted up into communion with the infinite. Do not, therefore, set too much store by your own feelings as evidences of grace. "The fruit of the Spirit is joy," but you may not at this moment be conscious of joy: trees are not always bearing fruit, and yet "their substance is in them when they lose their leaves." Some young people say, "Oh, we know we are saved, because we are so happy." It is by no means a sure evidence, for joy may be carnal, unfounded, unspiritual. Certain Christians are afraid that they cannot be in a saved state because they are not joyous, but we are saved by faith and not by joy. I was struck with the remark of Ebenezer Erskine when he was dying, and some one said to him, "I hope you have now and then a *blink* to bear up your spirit under affliction"; he promptly replied, "I know more of words than of *blinks*"; that is to say, he had rather trust a promise of God than his own glimpses of heaven; and so would I. The word of God is a more sure testimony to the soul than all the raptures a man can feel. I would sooner walk in the dark, and hold hard to a promise of my God, than trust in the light of the brightest day that ever dawned. Precious as the fruit is, do not put the fruit where the root should be. Please to recollect that. Joy is not the root of grace in the soul, it is the fruit, and must not be put out of its proper position.

"The fruit of the Spirit is joy," and it is brought forth in believers: not alike in all, but to all believers there is a measure of joy.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY IS OF A SINGULAR CHARACTER. It is singular for this reason, that *it often ripens under the most remarkable circumstances*. As I have already said, the highest joy of Christians has often been experienced in their times of greatest distress. Tried believers have been happy when smarting under pain, or wasting away with disease. Sick beds have been thrones to many saints; they have almost feared to come out of the furnace, because the presence of the Lord in the midst of the fire has made it none other than the gate of heaven to their souls. Saints in poverty have been made exceeding rich, and when they have eaten a dry crust they have found a flavour with it which they never discovered in the dainties of their abundance. Many children of God, even when driven away from the outward means of grace, have nevertheless enjoyed such visits of God, such inlets of divine love, that they have wondered whence such joy could come. In the wilderness waters leap forth, and streams in the desert. Believers are not dependent upon circumstances. Their joy comes not from what they have, but from what they are; not from where they are, but from whose they are; not from what they enjoy, but from that which was suffered for them by their Lord. It is a singular joy, then, because it opens buds, blossoms, and ripens in winter time, and when the fig tree does not blossom, and there is no herd in the stall, God's Habakkuks rejoice in the God of their salvation.

It is a singular joy, too, because *it is quite consistent with spiritual*

conflict. He that is an heir of heaven may cry, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and yet, ere the sigh is over, he may sing, "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; struggling, yet always victorious; cast down, but not destroyed; persecuted, but not forsaken; troubled, and yet all the while triumphant; such is the mingled experience of the saints. Oh, this is the wondrous grace, this joy which can live side by side with conflict of the sorest sort.

This joy is special because *at times it is altogether beyond description.* One who was of a sober disposition called it "joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Full of glory!" That is a wonderful expression. A drop of glory is sweet, but, oh, to taste a joy that is full of glory—is that possible here? Ay, and some of us bear witness that it is so: we have felt joy that we dare not tell, and could not tell if we dared: men would turn again and rend us, condemning us as utterly fanatical or out of our minds if we were to cast these pearls before them; but, oh, if they could guess what delicious draughts are held within the jewelled chalice of divine communion they would be ready to wade through hell itself to drink from it. Our joy is altogether unspeakable joy at times.

One more singularity there is in it, for *it is all the while solid, thoughtful, rational joy.* The joy of the ungodly is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, noisy, flashy, but soon over. The ungodly man feels merry, but really if you come to look into his mirth there is nothing in it but flame without fuel, sparkle without solidity; but the Christian's joy is such that he has as much reason for it as if it were a deduction from mathematics. He has as just a right to be joyful as he has to eat his own bread: he is certain of his pardon, for God has told him that a believer in Christ is not condemned; and he is sure of his acceptance, for he is justified by faith. He knows that he is secure, for Christ has given him eternal life, and said that his sheep shall never perish. He is happy, not for causes at which he guesses, but by infallible reasons plainly revealed in God's word. This makes him joyful in the Lord when others wonder that he is so, for he perceives arguments for happiness which are unknown to the thoughtless crowd.

That word "joyful" is a very sweet and clear one. "Happiness" is a very dainty word, but yet it is somewhat insecure because it begins with a "hap," and seems to depend on a chance which may *happen* to the soul. We say "happy-go-lucky," and that is very much the world's happiness, it is a kind of thing that may hap and may not hap; but there is no hap in the fruit of the Spirit which is joy. When we are joyful or full of joy, and that of the best kind, we are favoured indeed. No man taketh this joy from us, and a stranger intermeddleth not with it; it is a celestial fruit, and earth cannot produce its like.

III. Thirdly, I would now refresh your memories, and by the help of the Spirit of God bring back former joys to you: **THIS JOY IS EXPERIENCED BY THE CHRISTIAN UNDER VARIOUS FORMS.** Sometimes he experiences it in *hearing the word*: it is written concerning Samaria there was great joy in that city because Philip went down and preached the gospel to them. Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound. However, joy of hearing lies in *believing* what you hear. We get joy and peace in believing. When you get a grip of the word, when the glad tidings

becomes a message to your own soul, and the Spirit speaks it to your own heart, then you say, "Go on, man of God. Your sermon will not be too long to-day, for the Lord is laying it home to my soul." The reason why people grumble at long sermons often is because they do not feed on them. Very seldom the hungry man murmurs at having too big a meal. It is a delightful thing to hear the word faithfully preached. Have you not sometimes exclaimed, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings"? That is one occasion of joy.

But what joy there is, dear friends, in *the salvation of God* when we heartily receive it. Oh, how we bless the God of our salvation, and how we praise him that he hath saved us from our sins and from the wrath to come, by giving us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, by the sacrifice of his dear Son. Frequently we revel in *the privileges of the covenant*. The joy of my heart when I think of the doctrine of *election* is quite inexpressible. That hymn which begins—

"In songs of sublime adoration and praise,
Ye pilgrims to Zion who press,
Break forth, and extol the great Ancient of days,
His rich and distinguishing grace,"

is often with me, and makes my heart merry.

Then the doctrine of *redemption*, of which I tried to speak last Sabbath-day: how joyous it is! What bliss to know that the Redeemer liveth. "Unto you that believe he is precious," and a fulness of joy flows forth at every remembrance of him. Then that doctrine of *justification* is the marrow of joy. Oh, to think that we are just in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. All the doctrines of grace, especially that of *final perseverance*, are joyful truths. I protest that, if you take final perseverance from me, you have robbed the Bible of one of its crowning attractions. Jesus has not given us a transient salvation, but his salvation shall be for ever. I will quote again those matchless words of his: "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Honey flows here as in the wood of Jonathan; put it to your mouth and your eyes shall be enlightened. The joy of God's people when they can get half-an-hour alone, and sit down and crack a dish of those nuts called the doctrines of grace, is such as philosophical worldlings might well desire: the modern gospel has no such wines on the lees well refined.

But, brethren, our grandest joy is in *God* himself. Paul says, "and not only so, but we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, to think of the great Father! What a melting of spirit comes over the child of God if at midnight he looks up at the stars, and considers the heavens and cries, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him!" To think that he is not only mindful of us, but that he has taken us to be his sons and daughters! To feel the Spirit within our heart crying, "Abba, Father! Abba, Father!" Oh, this is joy in the profoundest sense.

How sweet to think of Jesus Christ the Son, the glorious incarnate God, the surety, the satisfaction, the representative, the all in all of his people. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor do we miss the joy of the Spirit, when we know that he dwells in us. He

sanctifies us, comforts us, and guides us in the road to heaven. Oh brethren, this is a sea of bliss, the infinite deeps of the eternal godhead ! Leap from all your miseries into this sea of glory. Plunge into the joy of your Lord.

This being so, we have a joy in all God's *ordinances*: "with joy do we draw water out of the wells of salvation." What a joy prayer is : I hope you find it so. The Lord hath said, "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." And what a joy it is to get answers to our petitions, even as our Lord says, "Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Has not your joy been full, till your eyes have been dim with tears and you have not hardly dared to tell how wondrously God has answered you ? The mercy-seat is lit up with joy. What a joyous ordinance is that of praise ! We come up to the sanctuary and bring our offering to God, and present him our oblation, just as the Jew of old brought his bullock or his lamb ; and we joyfully present our gift unto the Most High. Then we begin to sing his praises, and our joy is the chief musician upon our stringed instruments. How our spirits rise as we adore the Lord ! The amount of happiness felt in this Tabernacle when we have been singing unto the Lord can never be measured. For my own part, I have seemed to stand just outside the wall of the New Jerusalem joining in the hymns which are sung within the gates of the eternal city. One joy note has helped another, and the volume of sound has affected every part of our being and stirred us up to vehemence of joy.

And oh, what joy there is in coming to the Lord's table ! May we experience it to-night, as we have often done before. The Lord is known to us in the breaking of bread, and that knowledge is blissful.

But I have scarcely begun the list yet, for we have a great joy in *the salvation of other people*. Perhaps one of the choicest delights we know is when we partake in the joy of the good Shepherd over his lost sheep, when he calls us together, for we also are his friends and his neighbours, and bids us rejoice that he has found the sheep which was lost. Especially do we joy and rejoice if the poor wanderer has been brought back by our means. The jewels of an emperor are nothing compared with the riches we possess in winning a soul for Christ. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." The joy of harvest is great, the joy of the man who comes again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Do you know this joy, brothers and sisters ? If you do not, rouse yourselves, and may this sweet fruit of the Spirit yet be yours.

Oh, the joy of seeing Christ exalted ! John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease." He called himself the Bridegroom's friend, and rejoiced greatly in the Bridegroom's joy. We can sympathise with him when we can bring about a marriage between Christ and any poor soul, and help to put the ring on the finger. The joy we feel is of the purest and loveliest order, for it is unselfish and refined. Let Jesus be exalted, and we ask no more. If he reigns we reign ; if he is lifted up our hearts are more than satisfied.

Brethren, if we ever become perfect in heart, we shall joy in *all the divine will*, whatever it may bring us. I am trying, if I can, to find a joy in rheumatism, but I cannot get up to it yet. I have found a joy when it is over,—I can reach that length,—and I can and do bless God for any

good result that may come of it; but when the pain is on me, it is difficult to be joyous about it, and so I conclude that my sanctification is very incomplete, and my conformity to the divine will is sadly imperfect. Oh, the splendour of God's will! If a man were as he ought to be, God's will would charm him, and he would not wish for the smallest change in it. Poverty, sickness, bereavement, death, are all to be rejoiced in when our will is merged in the will of God. What! Would you alter God's infinitely wise appointment? Would you wish to change the purpose of unerring love? Then you are not wholly reconciled to God; for when the head gets quite right the heart climbs where Paul was when he said, "We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience." It needs a Samson to kill the lion of affliction, and you cannot get honey out of it until it is conquered; but we might all be Samsons if we would but lay hold on the strength of God by faith.

Dear brethren and sisters, the list of joys, which I am even now only commencing, contains the joy of *an easy conscience*, the joy of feeling you have done right before God, the joy of knowing that your object, though misunderstood and misrepresented, was God's glory. This is a jewel to wear on one's breast—a quiet conscience. Then there is the joy of communion with Christ, the joy of fellowship with his saints, the joy of drinking deep into Christ's spirit of self-sacrifice. There, too, is the joy of expecting his glorious advent, when he and his saints shall reign upon the earth, and the joy of being *with him for ever*. The joy of *heaven*, the joy of which we have been singing just now. These joys are countless, but I will pause here and leave you to make a fuller catalogue when you are at home. May the Holy Spirit not only refresh your memories concerning old joys, but bring forth out of his treasury new delights that your joy may be full.

IV. I must notice, in the fourth place, that **THIS FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT MAY BE CHECKED IN ITS GROWTH**. Some of you may have muttered while I have been speaking of this joy, "I do not know much about it." Perhaps not, friend—shall I tell you why? Some people are too full of the joy of the world, the joy of getting on in business, the joy of a numerous family, the joy of health, the joy of wealth, the joy of human love, or the joy which comes of the pride of life. These joys may be your idols, and you know the joy of the Lord will not stand side by side with an idolatrous delight in the things of this world. See to that. Dagon must fall if the ark of the Lord is present: the world must lose its charms if you are to joy in Christ Jesus.

Our joy is sadly diminished by our unbelief. If ye will not believe neither shall ye be established. Ignorance will do the same to a very large extent. Many a Christian has a thousand reasons for joy which he knows nothing of. Study the Word and ask for the teaching of the Spirit of God that you may understand it; so shall you discover wells of delight. Joy is diminished, also, by walking at a distance from God. If you get away from the fire you will grow cold: the warmest place is right in front of it, and the warmest place for a believing heart is close to Christ in daily fellowship with him.

It may be that sin indulged is spoiling our joy. "This little hand of mine," as Mr. Whitefield once said, "can cover up the sun as far as my

eyes are concerned." You have only to lift a naughty, rebellious hand, and you can shut out the light of God himself: any known sin will do it. Trifling with sin will prove a kill-joy to the heart.

I believe that many lose the joy of the Lord because they do not put it in the right place. See where it lives. Look at my text: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace." There joy stands in the centre; "love" is on one side and "peace" on the other. Find a man who never loved anybody and you have found a joyless man. This man's religion begins and ends with looking to his own safety. The only point he longs to know is,—is he himself saved? He never knows joy, poor creature; how can he? As to peace, where is it? He has none, because wherever he goes he growls, and grumbles, and snarls, and barks at everybody. There is no peace where he is, he is always quarrelling, and then he says, "I have little joy." He does not live in the right house for joy. Joy dwells at No. 2. "Love" is No. 1: "joy" is No. 2; "peace" is No. 3; and if you pull down either of the houses on the side, No. 2 in the middle will tumble down. Joy is the centre of a triplet, and you must have it so or not at all:—"Love, joy, peace." Thus have I shown how the growth of joy can be checked. I pray you do not allow such an evil thing to be wrought in your heart.

V. But, lastly, IT OUGHT TO BE CAREFULLY CULTIVATED. There is an obligation upon a Christian to be happy. Let me say it again: there is a responsibility laid upon a Christian to be cheerful. It is not merely an invitation, but it is a command—"Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye righteous." "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." Gloomy Christians, who do not resist despondency and strive against it, but who go about as if midnight had taken up its abode in their eyes, and an everlasting frost had settled on their souls, are not obeying the commands of God. The command to rejoice is as undoubted a precept of God as to love the Lord with all your heart. The vows of God are upon you, O believer, and they bind you to be joyful.

In this joyfulness you shall find many great advantages. First, it is a great advantage in itself to be happy. Who would not rejoice if he could? Who would not rejoice when God commands him? Rejoicing will nerve you for life's duties. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." A man who goes about Christ's work in an unwilling, miserable spirit will do it badly and feebly. He may do it earnestly, but there will be no life or energy about him. Hear how the sailors when they pull the rope will shout and sing, and work all the better for their cheery notes. I do not believe our soldiers would march to battle with half their present courage if they tramped along in silence. Beat the drums! Let the trumpet sound forth its martial note! Every man is eager for the fray while soul-stirring music excites him. Let your heart make music unto God, and you will fight valiantly for the kingdom of your Lord.

Holy joy will also be a great preventive. The man who feels the joy of the Lord will not covet worldly joy. He will not be tempted to make a God of his possessions or of his talents, or of anything else. He will say, "I have joy in God; these things I am very thankful for, but they are not my joy." He will not crave the æsthetic in worship, for his joy will be in God and his truth, and not in external forms. Some people's idea of joy in religion lies in fine singing, charming music, pretty dresses,

gaudid architecture, or showy eloquence. They need this because they do not know the secret joy of the Lord, for when that holy passion reigns within you may sit inside four whitewashed walls, and not hear a soul speak for a whole hour and a-half, and yet you may have as intense a joy as if you listened to the most earnest oratory or the sweetest song.

Joy in God is suitable to our condition !

“ Why should the children of a king
Go mourning all their days ? ”

What are we at now, some of us ? We have been hanging our harps on the willows : let us take them down ; the willow boughs will bend. Thank God, we did not break the harps, though we did hang them there. Let us get into our right position ; children of the happy God should themselves be happy.

Joy is certainly the best preparation for the future. We are going where, if we learn to groan never so deeply, our education will be lost, for melancholy utterances are unknown up there. We are going where, if we learn to sing with sacred joy, our education will be useful ; for the first thing we shall hear when we get into heaven will undoubtedly be, “ Hallelujah to God and the Lamb ; ” and if we have been joyful on earth we shall say, “ Ah, I am at home here. ” To enter heaven with a joyful soul is only to rise from downstairs to the upper chamber where the music knows no discord. It is the same song in both places, “ Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood. ”

Joy in the Lord will be very helpful to you as to usefulness. I am sure a Christian man's usefulness is abridged by dreariness of spirit. What nice Sunday-school teachers some Christians I know of would make ! “ Come ye children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the miseries of religion ; ” and the dear brother begins by telling the children about the Slough of Despond, and Giant Despair, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death. He wonders when he gets home that the dear children are not attracted to the ways of godliness. Are they likely to be ? A member of a church who has no joy of the Lord is little likely to encourage or influence others : they edge off from him. Even those who try to comfort him find it is to no purpose, and so they give him a wide berth. You hear him stand up to address an assembly of believers, to tell his experience, and after a very little of it you feel you have had enough. Those who drink wine will tell you that half a dozen drops of vinegar are more than they want in a glass of wine, and those who carry the cruet about wherever they go are not choice company. I do not find fault with gloomy souls, but they might be more useful if they could live more in the sunlight.

The joy of the Lord is the most injurious to Satan's empire of anything. I am of the same mind as Luther, who, when he heard any very bad news, used to say, “ Come, let us sing a psalm, and spite the devil. ” There is nothing like it : whenever anything happens that is rough and ugly, and seems to injure the kingdom of Christ, say to yourself, “ Bless the Lord, glory be to his name. ” If the Lord has been dishonoured by the falling away of a false professor, or the failure of the ministry in any place, let us give him all the more honour ourselves, and in some measure make up for all that has happened amiss.

And, lastly, holy joy is very pleasing to God. God delights in the joy of his creatures. He made them to be happy. His first and original design in the creation of all beings is his own glory in their happiness. When his people rejoice he rejoices. Some of you spent Christmas-day in the bosom of your families. Possibly you have a large family; ten or twelve were at home on that day, with a grandchild or two. I will tell you what was your greatest joy on that day: it was to see the happiness of your children, and to mark how they enjoyed what you had provided for them. They are only little children, some of them, creeping about on the floor, but they pleased you because they were so pleased themselves. The crow of a little child delights your heart to hear it, for it gives us joy to behold joy in those we love. Suppose your sons and daughters had all come marching in on Christmas-day in a very gloomy state of mind, cold, loveless, joyless; suppose that they did not enjoy anything, but grumbled at you and at one another, you would be quite sad, and wish the day to be soon over, and never come again for the next seven years. Thus in a figure we see that our heavenly Father delights in the delight of his children, and is glad to see them grateful and happy, and acting as children should do towards such a Parent.

Now, brethren, rise as one man, and sing—

“ Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry :
We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high.”

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxlii.
Philippians iv. 1—13.

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CHOICE FOOD FOR PILGRIMS TO CANAAN

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—
Exodus xxxiii. 14.

MAY the inexpressibly precious promises of our text be fulfilled to every one of you throughout the whole of your lives. What could heart desire, or mind conceive beyond the heaped-up blessedness of my text? God's presence and God's rest—a ring of finest gold set with the choicest pearl. The benedictions are worthy of God himself, and such as only his boundless love could have uttered. Think them over, and use them as food for your souls; with them you may well be content even if the preacher's lips should be as a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. You do not need any sermon: only let the Holy Spirit speak these words with power, as coming directly from the great Father's lips to you, and your inmost soul will be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

"Enough, my gracious Lord,
Let faith triumphant cry;
My heart can on this promise live,
Can on this promise die."

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

It is instructive to remember that a very short time before this promise was given, the Israelites had greatly grieved their God by setting up an image of gold, before which they prostrated themselves, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel." They had seen the greatness and glory of God at the Red Sea, and during their journey in the wilderness up to that time, and yet they were so besotted, that they bowed in worship before the image of an ox which eateth grass. We do not marvel that the living God was angry, but we are filled with astonishment that, after such wanton provocation, he should, nevertheless, turn away his wrath from them and say to them—for the promise was not to Moses only, but to them as a people—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Will God, then, go with sinners, with those who have provoked him so grossly, with those who have sinned against light and knowledge in so shameful a manner? Will he put away the iniquity of

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great offenders, and speak comfortably unto them? Yes, he will, for he is slow to wrath, and bears with our ill manners for many a day. Here is his own word: "For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off" (Isa. xlviii. 9). O my brethren and sisters, what a consolation it is to us, while labouring under a sense of sin, that the Lord is able to put away sin so that we shall not die; and he will come and walk with us and dwell in the midst of us, notwithstanding all our former wickednesses. You know what a righteous God he is, and how jealous he is, especially of those he loves; and yet, for all that, though he be a consuming fire, yet, so gracious is he that, passing by transgression, iniquity, and sin, he will return unto his people still, and yet again speak comfortably unto them. There is a secret, however, which must never be forgotten—namely, that Moses had made mightily prevalent intercession for the people, crying with many tears, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." He had gone up into the fiery mount, even up into the eternal presence; and there he had in will—though it was not accepted in deed—offered himself as a sacrifice for the nation in that memorable sentence, "If not, blot my name out of the book which thou hast written." Though the Lord could not accept the substitution of Moses, yet he remembered a greater one: he remembered one that was then to him as much present as if it had already taken place, for he seeth the end from the beginning, and the sacrifice of Christ was always present in the mind of God, before whom his Son Jesus is "the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world." If then we carefully search to the bottom of things we shall find that it was by virtue of the Mediator that this promise was given to Israel, and God thus spake to Moses and the people. Atonement had been made, intercession had been offered, and hence the Lord's presence was guaranteed and rest was promised. This is the only ground upon which God can dwell with you and with me and give us rest: an Advocate, one of a thousand, has stood in the gap, presented his life for our life, obtained favour of the Lord, and turned away indignation by the power of his intercession. God in Christ Jesus has come down to dwell with sinful men; and that presence will never be removed from us, for he saith, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you." He invites himself into our company; he offers to sup with us. Do not our hearts cry, "Come, Lord, manifest thyself to us, we pray thee, and let the promise which has been read in our ears be now fulfilled in our hearts by the power of thy Spirit":—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"?

It may be that I am addressing some who are about leaving this congregation for other assemblies at a distance; and, if so, I hope I may be the bearer of seasonable comforts. I have spoken to some just now whose faces we may not perhaps see again, who are going far away, to their great sorrow, and to our intense regret. I saw the tear when they bade good-bye to us, and to the house they have loved so well. Go in peace, and God be with you, my beloved. What more can I say? You are going to leave your native land: whether you shall ever return

to it again is written in the decree of providence, but is all unknown to you. Little need you mind, for we are all exiles, and are journeying towards the dear fatherland, where we shall be at home for ever. Others, it may be, are now making a very important change in life: shifting their habitation, or looking out for another occupation altogether. Many of us here who are serving the Lord are going forward to fresh work, planning new service for the Lord. At such a time this word will be peculiarly precious to all in a changing state, if the Holy Spirit will lay it home to their hearts: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Come, then, ye who bid farewell to old England's shores, ye who move to a strange family, ye who in any sense remove your tents and advance toward the unknown land—come, I say, and listen to these gentle accents, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

We will think of the subject in this way:—First, *what are the benefits of this presence?* Secondly, to be practical, *what are the demands of this presence if we come to enjoy it?* And then, thirdly, *what is the choice blessing which is appended to this presence*—"I will give thee rest"?

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE WHICH IS HERE PROMISED? "My presence shall go with thee."

The first is manifest in the chapter. It is *the acknowledgment of the people as being peculiarly the Lord's*. Notice, Moses puts it thus, "Wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth." This clearly shows that the presence of God with his people is God's way of acknowledging them, and saying to all mankind and to themselves, "These are my people, and I am their God." Now, my dear fellow-believer, what clearer acknowledgment of you by God can you conceive of than that God should be present with you? I think you cannot ask a surer, better seal than this; and if you have it not I cannot see what can be a token of peace to you at all. Is God never with you? Are you never conscious of his presence? Let me ask you to judge your case as if it were mine:—can I be a sheep in his fold if the shepherd never comes to me? Can I be a child of the family if I have never had my heart warmed with my Father's love, and have never heard my Father's voice speaking comfortably to me? The saints are married unto Christ, but that were a strange conjugal union in which there was no sort of converse or communion whatsoever. If I am unable to see my Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus, because my soul is in darkness, I must walk by faith; but I must not think the darkness light and try to be comfortable without him. I must feel that, until the daystar shines again, and Christ's presence returns, I must be unhappy, and I must search the city and go about the streets thereof, saying, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" But if never at all I have enjoyed his presence, if never once I could say, "He is near me; he is with me," then how can it be possible that I am his? If I go forth to the business of the day and never recognize God; if I come home at night and have never seen God's hand with me; if I go to my bed and never, ere I sleep, have a kind word from him, then, surely, I cannot be one of his: I lack the acknowledgment which the great

Father must and will give to his own children. I do not see how a man can feel at all certain, nay, how he can entertain the hope, that he belongs to the Lord, except as he enjoys his presence. Every true child of God wants his Father's company. Every true wife desires the presence of her spouse. Our Lord's presence is life and light, health an dwealth, strength and song to us. Our prayer is,—If thy presence go not with me, carry me not up hence; for I should go forth a sheep untended to stray where grievous wolves watch for their feeble victims.

That is the first benefit of the presence of God. It is the glory which lights up the soul of the believer, and marks it as the special property of heaven.

Secondly, it is *by that presence that we are preserved and protected*. When Israel came out of Egypt the Egyptians followed hard behind them. Pharaoh was fierce to slay them or to drive them back again; but he could not touch them. They came not nigh one another all that night, because the Lord descended and like an impenetrable shield of darkness turned himself upon the enemy, while like a sun he turned the brightness of his glory upon his people. The presence of God enabled Israel to pass through the sea on dry foot, and that same presence brought down the floods upon their foes and swept them away. All through the wilderness they might have been fallen upon by the wandering tribes, especially of the Amalekites, but the camp of Israel was never stormed by an orderly army, nor even plundered by a marauding band. Never did an invader's foot plant itself within those streets of canvas. There were no bastions and fortifications, but the presence of the Lord was a wall of fire round about his people. None could touch them so long as the Lord was there. It was true that Amalek fell upon them once upon their march, and slew the hindmost of them, but this showed that those farthest off from God are in the greatest danger, and even these would not have been overthrown had not Israel sinned. Even their hindmost would have been secure if they had walked aright with God. Who can harm those whom Jehovah ordains to keep? Who shall fight against the God invincible and omnipotent? If enemies come out against his chosen, he will utterly destroy them. Who shall break through ramparts of fire to touch the sons of God?

I think every child of God must acknowledge how safe he has been when he has enjoyed the divine presence. When you get out of that presence you are liable to temptations which in the divine presence scarcely come to you, or, if they come, they are shaken off as trifles which have no power over you. When we dwell in God the baser passions lie still,—like the beasts in Noah's ark, they cause no uproar; but when God is gone those baser passions rush to the front, and the inferior appetites and propensities try to get the mastery over us, and cause us all sorts of trouble. While we are in the presence of God, we may safely stand in the midst of wicked men if Providence calls us there, and we shall keep our tongue with a bridle, and baffle all their cunning. Yea, our soul may be among lions, but no lion can touch us when God is with us in the den. We may go into the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, but the glowing coals cannot leave even the smell of fire upon us while God is with us in the flame. We are always safe in the presence of God in any place and in any work; but, if the Lord be withdrawn from us,

then in his sanctuary we shall be tempted to transgress, like Eli's sons; and in his temple the devil will meet with us and ply his horrible temptations. In the commonest transactions of life we shall blunder and transgress if we move without the Lord, for the presence of God is the sole protection of saints. Our sanctity depends upon communion with God. Like the moon, we are bright while the sun shines on us; all our glory is borrowed from our Lord. Oh, how blessed is the promise, then, if we view it in that light, for we all wish to be preserved from the defilement of the world, and this is the one golden method of sanctity, "My presence shall go with thee."

There is a third privilege which the presence of God brought to Israel, and brings to us: it is that of *direction and guidance*. Their route lay through a wilderness without a track-way, and they could not have known which way to go except the fiery cloudy pillar, which was the index of the presence of God, had gone before them. Their path was a very strange one as it was, winding in and out, backwards and forwards; but "he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation." Such is our pathway to the skies, a maze, a tangle, to ourselves; but all plain to the All-wise. You and I know nothing of what is going to happen to us between here and heaven; nay, we cannot tell what will occur within an hour; but some amazing blessing may come: I have no doubt you, my brethren, have had in your own lifetime days of surprises. You have been jogging along the ordinary road of life pretty comfortably, you never thought of what was going to happen; but you have come to a place where the road suddenly diverged, and from that instant new scenes have opened up before you. You hardly knew whether you were to go to the right or to the left, and you were at your wits' end as you pulled up, for there was no sign-post, and no mark to guide you. At such times, if the presence of God has been with you, you have not been left to ask the way; but that ancient promise has become true in your experience. "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee saying, This is the way: walk ye in it." You could not explain to other people why you took that particular road, but you can see that if you had taken any other your whole life would have been darkened. After a fashion you explain to yourself why you did this rather than that; but if you had talked about it to your most intimate friend, it is just possible he would have replied, "Don't you think there may be a touch of fanaticism about your action? Is there not a little superstition in your reasoning?" So it might be thought, but there is a secret something between you and your God, which is the key of the position, and accounts for acts which else were unaccountable. If God were not there, it would have been superstition; but as God was really there, and you are one with whom he has become so graciously familiar that he gives to you the Urim and the Thummim, and reveals to you his light and his truth to guide you, there was no superstition or fanaticism in it. O the soft, sweet guidances of the royal presence; they have made my life radiant; like all his other gentlenesses, they have made me great. "He leadeth me," and yet again "He leadeth me," is one of the most joyous notes of my song of loves.

Ah, if the Lord be not with us, it is extraordinary what muddles we make. I have sometimes had very, very difficult things to do, and I

have accomplished them with ease under the Lord's own eye, but if I am without my Lord's presence, I give very bad advice, and I most judiciously do very stupid things, and most prudently follow a course which everybody would say was prudent, but which turns out to be imprudent. I have noticed—and I often have to bless God for it—that when I have felt myself to be quite done over and nonplussed, I have simply asked guidance, and something has occurred to me which I had never thought of before; or something which I had thought of and rejected, but which was the best, has occurred strongly to my mind again; or somebody else has come in and taken the leadership and put me aside; but somehow or other God has been glorified, and I have been happy when I have had his presence. I am sure that every believer will find it so in daily life: wherein the first thing is not to have common sense and to be wise, as some say, but to have a sense of God's presence, which is better than common sense, and to trust in him for guidance, which is better than being shrewd. He will make the young men wise and prudent; he will give to babes knowledge and discretion, if they are but willing to be led by his divine instruction. You will find it so if you have his presence with you; but if you have not, you will be just as the Israelites did about the matter of the Gibeonites, which seemed too simple to pray about. You will be taken in with those mighty crosses and those clouted shoes, and those crafty rascals that say, "We come from a far country," and without taking counsel with God you will find yourself in fellowship with a brood of scheming ~~Canaanites~~ who will entangle you and do you no end of harm. You will say, "Oh, but they are such nice old people, and it is wonderful how ~~wisely~~ they talk, and how nicely they persuade me to their side." Yes, when Satan would deceive, his traps are very simple ones, such as you would never think to be traps at all. When you are quite clear about a thing, pray about it: when you are in difficulty, do as you like. I believe in that fine piece of advice—"When it is a fine day in this country, carry an umbrella with you. When it is raining hard, do just as you like." I put it into another shape, and beg you to remember it. "When," you say, "the matter is as plain as the nose on my face." Then pray to God about it, for the nose on your face may bring you trouble. He that trusts to his own understanding may turn out to have very little understanding to trust to. Take plain matters to God. Get into the presence of God, and keep there, and see all things in the light of that presence: that will be to you instinct, common-sense, judgment, wisdom.

We have thus seen that rich blessings are found in the presence of God—divine acknowledgment, divine protection, and divine direction; but there was another thing that Israel had by virtue of the presence of God, and that was *real worship in the wilderness*. Their sacrifices could not have been presented if God had not been among them. There would not have been the tabernacle, with all its appurtenances, if God had not been there. God would not have commanded them to build him a house that he did not intend to inhabit, and he would not have instituted ordinances which he did not mean to fill up by his presence. It is unimaginable that there should be a tabernacle with all the outward gear of it, and sacrifices even until rivers of the blood of fed

beasts should be poured out, yet it would have been all an empty, hollow sham if God had not himself been there. Brethren, we cannot in spirit and in truth worship God if we feel him to be absent. We must "believe that he is"; and it is a part of the "is" that he is everywhere present. We must believe that God is here, at this moment, or we are quite unable to pray to him. To pray to a God who is many leagues away is like the worshipper of Baal who says, "Peradventure he is on a journey, or he is hunting, or he sleepeth and must be awakened." Elijah never thought that of Jehovah. When he stood by the altar and began to plead with the Lord God of Israel, it never entered into his head that he was sleeping and must be awakened, or that he was up among the stars and needed to be aroused by shouting. The prophet knew that he spoke right into the eternal ear, and talked right into the divine heart, for he felt that God was there. No worship will do us good, or can be accepted with God, except the Lord be present with us in it. When you live in the presence of God how delightful worship is! You can right jubilantly sing songs upon your stringed instruments when the Lord Jehovah hears your praise. The same is true of prayer. You can wrestle with the angel, and hold him when you are sure he is there; but if he is not there you cannot wrestle with him, or even hold him. You can go forth to preach right bravely when you go in the strength of the Lord God to make mention of his righteousness, even of that only; but if the Lord go not with the minister what a vain-glorious place the pulpit is, and what empty stuff our talk must be. How delightful to come to the Lord's table if the King sits thereat, and his spikenard gives forth a sweet perfume. But what is bread, and what is wine, and what is the table, if the King himself be not there? The presence of Jesus consciously enjoyed is the sweetness of our worship, and all goes awry where this is not found. Oh, that we may never attempt to do anything for God except with God, or think that we can worship at all unless the Spirit of God be in the worship, prompting and quickening it.

Once more, if God had withdrawn from Israel there would have been *no communion with him*. God's presence meant communion with God. The Israelites could speak with God through their priests when he was in the midst of them, but if he had departed all fellowship would have ceased. And is not that one of the greatest enjoyments of a child of God—that he can speak to his Father whenever he desires it? No child, I think, as a rule asks leave to speak to his father, but feels an unquestioned freedom on that point. I did go some time ago into a house where I sat with the head of the family, and heard a humble knock at the door: it was his wife, who asked if she might come in, but her lord and master spoke somewhat sharply, and she went away. I heard afterwards one of the girls come to knock at the door to know whether she might come in, and I wondered at it, because it is rather unusual nowadays for a man to be lord enough, but this gentlemen was lord too much by a long way. I thank God that I have never seen more than one instance in which a wife or a child was called upon humbly to knock at the door before she could come into the majestic presence of her husband or her father. I have always enjoyed the respect of my sons, but it has never occurred to them to ask leave to

speak to me. Yet many professed Christians treat their heavenly Father in that way: they are afraid of him, and dare not tell him all their hearts. But this is just the sweet privilege of a dear child, that he may turn his eye to the great Father whenever he pleases, and have a private audience with the King of kings at any hour of the day or night. Strangers may not do this; strangers must get an introduction; strangers must come with a great deal of ceremony if they want to see a king, but the little prince does not need any usher of the black rod to introduce him to his sire. The believer's relation to his Father is a key which opens every door. We are on familiar terms with the great God, as it is written, "I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." In another place he puts it thus: "They shall be my sons and daughters." Oh sweet word—"my sons and daughters." This is a privilege which is secured to us by the presence of God.

If any of you have lost the presence of God, I have no doubt you have some kind of awe that makes you stand a long way off, as Israel stood at a distance from the burning mount of Sinai; but if God is with you, then no notion of standing a long way off need come to you. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." We eat and drink and sleep eternal life. Whatsoever we do, we do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of his abiding presence. The presence of God comes to be as palpable to us as the air we breathe, perhaps more so; as certain to us as the life we live. We know him to be with us, and we are as much in the habit of speaking with him as with our dearest friend; yea, much more, because we must be parted from the dearest friend at times, but from our God we are never divided; but, be we where we may, and in what frame of mind we may, we can always speak with him. "When I awake I am still with thee." I fall asleep, and he is at my bedside; I wake up at any hour of the night, and there is he. "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." He is always ready for fellowship with his people. May you have this ever-enjoyable, always encompassing presence with you all the year round. May the Spirit of God put it to those whom I have mentioned, who are moving or shifting their place by taking a long journey, or who are about to take the last long journey, who feel that the sentence of death is written upon them—is not this presence all that your spirits can possibly crave? Even death will give you no alarm if this sweet text is fully enjoyed by you—"My presence shall go with thee." Certainly the hardships and dangers of emigration dwindle into insignificance before this promise:—"My presence shall go with thee among strangers. My presence shall go with thee across the sea. My presence shall go with thee to the bed of sickness. My presence shall go with thee through the valley of the shadow of death. My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

That is the first point.

II. The second head shall not occupy much time, but I hope that it will be hammered out into a lifelong sermon, preached by yourselves. **WHAT ARE THE DEMANDS OF THIS PRESENCE?** Supposing that the divine presence shall go with us, what then?

Why, first it is needful that *we rely upon it*. Beloved, if the presence of God be with us, do not let us act as if it were not with us,

or as if it were not worth much although it is with us. If God's presence is with us, what have we to be afraid of? Where is the excuse for our spirit being cast down? If God's presence be with us, why do we talk about difficulties? That word should not be in our dictionary now that omnipotence is at our right hand. If God's presence be with us, why should we speak about fears? Whom shall we fear? "Thou art the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?" Oh, let this presence of God be real to you, if you are enjoying it. Do not talk about it, and then speak as if you were all alone, and go forth to your work, saying, "I am not strong enough." What, not if the Lord is with you? Do set down your God at a right figure in all your calculations; that is to say, if you can find a figure that will represent him. What is your strength? A unit. Well, if you like, you may make a cipher of it, for that is nearer the truth. But what is God's strength? Oh, you may carry it up to the n th, as we say in algebra. You may work it out to the utmost conceivable limit, but you will never get a figure that will come near expressing the power of the presence of God. "I am with you"—"I," and the universe echoes to the voice, as the words "I AM" roll in thunder peals along the heavens. "I have formed the earth and laid its foundations, and up-reared the arches of the sky. I am with you, with my omnipotence, omniscience, all-sufficiency." Well, if that be so, rely upon it; stay yourself upon God, and do not play the fool by being dismayed and cast down. "I am with thee." Away with melancholy! Should a little child be always trembling and sobbing out, "Mother, I am alone, and I am afraid"? Her mother says, "I am with you, dear child; I am with you." Will she not have done with her sobbing? So does the Lord say, "How canst thou fear? How canst thou fall? I am with thee." If we have his presence, let us treat it as a matter of fact, and be filled with rest.

In the next place, if we have his presence, *let us use it*. Every now and then we meet with persons who have thousands of pounds, and yet are half starved. We have heard of two great lords who were spending the evening together at a coffee-house, and the bill came to an odd sum, and they quarrelled about who should pay the odd farthing, till one of the waiters said, "Come up here! Here are two lords worth fifty thousand a-year each, and they are quarrelling about a farthing." That was a strange sight; but have you not seen Christian people behaving quite as inconsistently? They have the revenues of the universe to spend, and yet they starve themselves by the little enjoyment that they dare to take? Of heavenly food they live upon a crumb a day. They are just like the elder brother who said to his father, "These many years do I serve thee; neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment; and yet thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." You remember his father's answer. He said, "Thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. If you have not eaten all the goats, it is your own fault. You might have been as merry with your friends as you liked, for all that I have is thine." And so may the Lord often reproach his people. "I am with you, but you do not use me. You do not exercise faith in me as to the mountains which lie before you, which should become plains if you left them

to me. You do not leave me your sycamine trees, for me to pluck them up by the roots. I can do all things, and here you are using this poor feeble arm of yours with all its wasting, aching sinews, when there is an everlasting arm which would be made bare for your defence, and which would shake heaven and earth rather than fail to bring you deliverance." Why, brethren? Why are we so slow to believe? Oh, if you have the presence of God, utilize it.

And then, next, if you have the presence of God, do not grieve him: ~~do not grieve him~~. In the presence of a king men behave themselves. Have you never known, as a boy, when you have been up to some little trick, some one has said, "Hush, here is father coming;" and you have stopped your game at once. Oh, how reverently, how cautiously, how ~~cautiously~~, how holily ought we to behave ourselves who are in the presence of God!

It is wonderful what God will do for us. He often surprises us with what he does. He seems to be inventive in the liberality of his grace. He will make our path smooth, though hitherto it has been roughness itself. Often and often does he enrich our way, as though we were like the lepers who followed the Assyrians when they threw away their silver and their gold. We are surprised to find what ~~greatness~~ his mercy has scattered for us. Do we not feel that we must walk tenderly towards one who deals with us so gently? Such mercy as his should make us fear and tremble, because of the great goodness of God. It must be, I was going to say, a terrible thing to be a king's favourite; but what a terribly blessed thing it is to be the favourite of God—to be lifted up so near to him as to enjoy the light of his countenance. We ought to look at all our words before we speak them when we are in his presence, and stop our thoughts before we think them, if such a thing could be, lest any of them should vex his Spirit, and prove unbecoming in the presence of his majesty.

And, oh, when you have the presence of God, do take care to glorify him all that you possibly can. Does he deign to dwell in you? Then lay yourself out for his honour. Seek out those who have lost his company, and go and cheer them. Find out all the daughters of sorrow, all the backsliders and wanderers, and all the poor sinners that are on the wild mountains, and seek to bring them where you are yourself—into the presence of the gracious Three in One. I think that if we do not work at any other season, we certainly should do so when we are abiding in the light of his countenance. If my soul keeps no holiday at any other time, she shall certainly be dressed in her bravest, and shine in her best when the King himself visits me. It is a grand thing to go to work for God with the glory of God about your brow, and the love of God warming your heart, and the strength of God making your spirit courageous, and the wisdom of God directing you in the choice of words. Thus shall you work to purpose, and a work shall be done which will redound to the eternal glory.

Thus you see that the presence of God has its demands.

III. My time has gone, and therefore I must say only two or three words about that last word of promise. WHAT IS THE CHOICE BLESSING WHICH IS APPENDED TO THIS PRESENCE? "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

In this particular text we must confine the "rest" to the end of the journey, for Israel were to have their *rest* in Canaan; and so the promise was, "My presence shall go with you through the wilderness, and I will give you *rest* in the land that floweth with milk and honey."

Beloved, it were no narrowing of the promise if we were to limit it to that sense to-night. If God's presence be with us here, we shall be in God's presence hereafter, and there we shall have rest. Some of you good workpeople come in here on Thursday nights, and cannot come in quite in time. Well, never mind, you can come late. I would sooner have you for ten minutes than not at all. A piece of a loaf is better than starving. I know that to many of you the idea of rest must be very sweet. To those who work very, very hard, as some of you do, the thought of an everlasting rest is very pleasant. But perhaps some of you have never been converted. I want to put this thought into your mind: Will you rest? Will you rest at last? They will lay your bones in the cemetery, and apparently you will rest; but *will you rest?* Oh, will you rest? Do you think you can rest if you die with unforgiven sin? Can you rest if you die unreconciled to God? Ah, no. "There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." Only think if that should be your portion for ever and ever—never to rest, but to be like the troubled sea, foaming, raging, and tossed about throughout eternity! God grant, dear hearer, that such a fearful unrest may not be your portion. But oh, if you will trust in Jesus, and value his presence with you here, what sweet rest there will be above! I have heard some people speak about the rest of heaven as though it were only a bribe to lazy people. They sneer at the idea of rest, but those people who do not desire rest are unacquainted with hard work. I am persuaded of that. Your lackadaisical ladies and gentlemen, who never did a stroke of work in all their lives, and could not if they tried, may despise heaven as a rest, but to many of us that Scripture is most pleasant, "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." The idea of service is, undoubtedly, very sweet—eternal service—very sweet to the strong, active young Christian; but I tell you that when you get older, and when your heads often ache with anxious care, and oftentimes you are worn down in the service of your Master, you will get more inclined to look upon heaven as a place of rest, and you will thank God that the Holy Spirit was not quite so hard as these fine ladies and gentlemen, but did speak to us of heaven as a place where the saints shall rest from their labours and their works shall follow them. We do not know where we shall go between now and heaven, but we shall get home at last, and then we shall rest. We do not know how much more work we have to do, we cannot tell how often the burden will press our shoulder; but we shall rest one day. "I will give thee rest." Here is a "*shall*" and a "*will*." "My presence *shall* go with thee, and I *will* give thee rest." Ah, poor toiler, you shall rest. O poor aching eyes, ye shall rest when ye shall see the King in his beauty. O poor aching brain, thou shalt rest when thou shalt have nothing to do but to joy in God, and praise him day and night in his temple.

But I think that under the gospel dispensation we may take this promise in a far wider sense. "My presence shall go with thee, and

I will give thee rest," *even now* ; for "we which have believed do enter into rest." While we are believing we obtain rest, and this is the kind of rest. We have not the rest of inactivity, but that of peace : the Israelites kept journeying on, and yet the Lord was their dwelling-place. We have not the rest of luxury : the Israelites had to tread the barren sand, and live in tents ; but ours is the rest which is consistent with daily service and with frequent trial. We rest in this way : we are perfectly at ease about everything. As to the future, what have we to do with that ? We have not come to it yet. God arranges things to come. As for the present, we "cast our care upon him, for he careth for us." As to our sins, they are gone, dead, buried, lost, and never will be seen again. They cannot be found, for God himself has cast them behind his back. As for the devil, he is a chained enemy. As for the world, Christ has said, "Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." As for the needs of the body, he has said, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." As for the needs of the soul, Christ is ours, and all things are ours in Christ. As for our eternal safety, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." He will glorify us as certainly as he has justified us.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus xxxii. 30 to end, and xxxiii. 1—16.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again."—*Luke vi. 32—34.*

BRETHREN in Christ, every word which proceeds out of our Master's lips is precious to us. We make no distinction between his promises and his precepts, but prize every syllable above rubies. A doctrine from him we value beyond the much fine gold, and a command is equally high in our esteem. Whether his teaching be practical or doctrinal, whether it be intended to guide the feet or to encourage the heart, we are equally rejoiced at it.

"All his words are music, though they make us weep;
Infinitely tender, infinitely deep."

All the discourses of Jesus are the words of God to our soul, whether they convey to us instruction, warning, rebuke, invitation, or consolation. As *all* his garments smell of myrrh, and aloe, and cassia, so are all his words most sweet to our taste. We have not so learned Christ as to be pickers and choosers when the fruits of his lips are before us. Yet have I known professors of that sort, who would fain rend the Master's vesture that they might have only the softest part of it to be a pillow for their idle heads. "That," they say, "was a gospel sermon, sweet food for our souls," because it happened to tell of what Christ has done for us; but on the next occasion they cry out, "That was not a gospel sermon; it was legal; it laid a burden upon our shoulders," because it dared to tell of what Christ has commanded us to do for him. Such men, it seems to me, accept Christ for a servant rather than for a Master. They are glad that he shall do this or that for them—that he shall, in fact, gird himself and wait at their table while they sit down to meat; but if they had learned better they would have chosen Christ for a Master, and would have been willing to gird themselves at his command and wait on their Lord, counting it their honour

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to be surprised to *find a Prince*. Feeling certain that you are not of the order of vulgar savillers, but that you will accept anything that I say, I am glad to have a practical subject this morning. You are on the Mount, as full of light to you as the Transfiguration on the Mount. You are as glad to hear what the Son of God has to say by way of message as to hear what the Father had to say by way of recognition. As for this sermon in the plain, it was preceded by a message as forcible to you as the signs and wonders could have been, and you have seen them all. The sick touched his garment and were healed; the devils who were possessed of devils were healed: you saw the miracles of Christ, but you see him to be as mighty in word as in deed, and you adore him for his gracious teachings which have not ceased after his miracles have ceased. Here you have certain of the words of Christ, and may his Spirit bless them to your hearts.

In the matters of which I shall have to speak this morning in the name of the Lord, taken, as I am quite certain, from his own words, there will be some things strange and unusual which may possibly seem harshly in your ears. Be not astonished, for the gospel is one of the thoughts of God which are not our thoughts: the whole system which Christ has ushered in is foreign to men, being as far above them as the heavens are above the earth. Our Lord's kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants do many things which now they forbear to do. The conduct of the subjects of that kingdom must not be measured by the manners of others; for they are a people as peculiar as the kingdom to which they belong. We have heard persons say, "I do not see it to be my duty to be so precise; it is not customary." What have you and I to do with custom? If things are right, but not in fashion, let us start the fashion; and when it is the fashion to do wrong, let us be desperately unfashionable. Our Master, evidently, from the reverse before us, did not come into the world to teach us to conform to the ways of our fellow men; but he would have us go far beyond the ordinary conduct of our fellows. He asked in his sermon on the mount, "What do ye more than others?" He ordains a standard far above the common standard of mankind when he says again and again, "What thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." "Oh," one may say at the close of my sermon, "the preacher demands more of us than can reasonably be expected from flesh and blood." Your charge is correct; but then the preacher is not addressing himself to you as to flesh and blood, but as to those who are possessed of a far higher principle, namely, the indwelling Spirit of God. True believers walk not after the flesh, nor do they mind the things of it, for they are clothed with the energy of the Spirit of God, and by his power their lives are lifted above the common walks of men. If so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ye are of another nature than the men of this world, and it is to be expected that ye should live after a nobler fashion. "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" We live under a spirit whose law is perfection, and therefore a little fault causes us much self-condemnation. We judge ourselves by a severer rule than we would apply to others; for our privileges and responsibilities are exceptionally great. I allow in other men what I would denounce in myself. I could approve in some men actions which

to me also would be lawful but would not be expedient, upon the higher rule of glorifying God in all things. When I have heard of certain deeds of unconverted and unenlighted men I have excused them, saying, "Poor souls, considering who they were, and where they were, their conduct is not so heavily to be blamed"; and yet if I had behaved one half as badly there would have been rebellion and presumption in the deed. For favoured children there is a different law from that which governs common subjects; that which is passed over in strangers is atrocious when it comes from a bosom friend. You are not under law, but under grace; and being under grace, you feel the force of a constraint even holier and higher than mere law could put upon you.

If you are what you profess to be, my brethren, more is expected from you than from any other men beneath the sun, and therefore I shall throw aside all hesitancy in setting before you a supreme standard, and asking of you what we never can get from sinners, nor from men of the world. Know ye not that your Lord has said, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven"? If I were called to address an ordinary company of men and women upon feats of valour, I might speak with bated breath if I exhorted them to heroism in war; but if I had lived some thousands of years ago, and had been called upon to talk to Spartan warriors, all equipped for battle, men graced and scored with the scars of conflict, I should set no bounds to my exhortations; I would bestir them as a lion arouses the young lions and urges them to the prey. I should tell them that their name and parentage should not be disgraced by the idea of defeat, but that they must expect victory, and seize it as their right. No orator would have spoken to Spartans as to Boeotians: it was their very life and business to fight, and deeds of prowess were therefore to be looked for from them. Is it not so with you, ye followers of the Crucified? Your martyrs and confessors call upon you to lead a life beyond that of common men. I say all this, because to certain of you a sort of apology may seem needful for the strong things that may be said before you at this time. May God's Holy Spirit come upon you, and make you strong enough for all the strong things, glorifying himself in your weakness.

I. Our first observation in plunging into our discourse is this. MUCH THAT IS NATURALLY GOOD MAY FALL FAR SHORT OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. Do not make the mistake of saying that moral excellence is not good. Some have broadly declared that there is no good thing in an unconverted man; but this is scarcely true. It will generally be so understood that its meaning will be false, and this is a great pity; we must not utter falsehood in order to honour God: there is a great deal of good—good under certain senses and aspects of the term "good"—in many unconverted people. Many who are total strangers to the grace of God yet exhibit sparkling forms of the human virtues in integrity, generosity, kindness, courage self-sacrifice, and patience. I could wish that some who call themselves Christians were in certain respects as good as others whom I know of who have never borne the Christian name. It is always right to speak the truth, and truth obliges me to say as much as this. This ought to make professors very seriously in earnest to judge themselves, lest they should mistake natural amiability

and morality for the fruit of the Spirit of God. If the question be whether our character is the offspring of nature or of grace, it will be a sad thing if the verdict should turn out to be that it is the dead child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of grace divine. We may be decorated with gems which glitter and glow, and yet they may be mere paste, and none of them the work of God's Spirit. We may be adorned from head to foot with that which is lovely and of good repute, and for all that we may come short of what God requires of us, because inwardly our heart is not in accordance with our outward array. The platter is clean, it could not be cleaner; but while the filth remains within, it cannot be acceptable with God.

Observe the three things mentioned in the text against which there is no law, but of which much is to be spoken in commendation. These acts are good, but they do not come up to Christ's standard. The first is, "If ye love them which love you." It is very proper and seemly that *friendly feeling* should awaken kindly feeling in return; that to those who are friendly to us we should be friendly also. We say "Love begets love," and it is natural that it should do so. Yet I am sorry to say that, though this is no more than a natural excellence, it is not by any means so common as to be universal. There are children who do not love parents who toiled and slaved for them in their childhood, but who grow up to exhibit a strange hardness of heart to the authors of their existence. I know brothers who do not love the most affectionate and amiable of sisters, and it is grievous to have to add that there are many husbands, brutal husbands, who do not love their wives, who are sacrificing their lives out of love to them and their little ones. I blush to think of the many instances which I could quote, but there is no need; you know it is so.

Thousands have never reached so high as this standard. "If ye love them which love you." But even if we reach as high as that it is by no means a great attainment: is it? Our Lord says that sinners also love those that love them. Grace is not needed to make a man the loving husband of a tender wife; grace is not needed to make affectionate sons and daughters; we see them all around us. I am sure it does not require grace in the hearts of the bulk of you to make you feel kindly towards those who treat you in a friendly manner; "sinners also love those that love them." You have all come as far as that, and such feeling is good, the more of it the better; yet it is not up to the mark of Christ's teaching if it stands alone: it is not that for which the Holy Spirit has begotten us again: it is not that for which Christ has shed his precious blood. Higher virtue exists than that which loves them that love you; here it is—we are to love them that hate us and despitefully entreat us. Can you love those who will not mention your name without grinding their teeth in envy, or sneering in scorn? Can you love those who have belied your character, who have shown the best they can to ruin you, and who will do the same again? Can you feel towards them an earnest desire for their present and eternal welfare? If you could do them good would you delight to do it, and repent the deed until you had made them too happy to be malicious, too much indebted to continue at enmity? This would be glorious indeed, especially if you could keep clear of all selfish motive in such a contest

of love, and should do it all, not because you want to seem a hero or to be something great, but simply because you delight to do good, and feel it to be a pleasure to do that good where it is most needed, namely, where the spirit of enmity has the greatest power.

This is high, and I think I hear some one say, "I cannot attain unto it; I can love those that love me, but loving those that hate me is another business; I shall have to look at the matter two or three times before I attempt it." I dare say you will, my friend, and hence it is that it needs the work of God himself to make us Christians; it needs Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to work miracles of grace within us ere we become Godlike. Godliness is Godlikeness, and this is not easy to attain.

The next thing, in the verses before us, is *grateful return*. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?" It is a very right thing that if persons have served us we should endeavour to repay the benefit. By common consent "one good turn deserves another." I am sorry to say that though this is a very ordinary sort of virtue it is not the commonest thing in the world, for you may help others if you like, but I have heard that they do not always help you in return. I cannot speak from any painful experience here, for all have been kind to me, and I have had good measure, pressed down and running over, poured into my bosom; but I have met with men who have bitterly bewailed the ingratitude of those whom they had aforesaid benefited. They claim to have helped others generously, but when their turn has come to need assistance they have not received it: I do not feel very sure about the aforesaid claim, but that is the way in which they talk. It is certainly a horrible thing that men should be ungrateful; but yet supposing that you, dear hearer, are grateful, and have lately taken special pains to do good to one who aforesaid was good to you, what thank have you? You have done what you ought to have done, and no more; you have paid an old debt as every honest man should do, but this does not prove you to be a Christian, for Christianity includes this and rises above it, like an alp above the surrounding plain.

Followers of Jesus are called upon to do good to those who have done them harm. You know the old saying, evil for good is devil-like, evil for evil is beast-like, good for good is man-like, good for evil is God-like. Rise you to that God-like point. If a man has taken the bread out of your mouth, seize the first opportunity to help him to a livelihood. If he has bespattered you, be ready to forgive him, but say not a word against him. Watch for a time, when by great kindness, you may heap coals of fire on his head. "Hard teaching," says one. I know it is, and harder doing, but it is blessed doing. It is sweet to render good for ill! There is a self-conquest about it which ennoble the soul more than the conquest of an empire: there is a getting near to Christ in such actions that hath about it more of heaven than all beside. That patient, persevering rendering of benefits for injuries, returning of favour for enmity, gives us fellowship with him who, when we were enemies, laid down his life for us. Oh, taste of this sweet grace of forgiveness, and see if it be not good. If you have hitherto never known Christian joy, you shall know it then. It is a high virtue; nevertheless, to this we must come if we are to be the followers of Christ.

Again, you note in the thirty-fourth verse that mention is made of *helping others in a neighbourly way* with the expectation of their returning the friendly deed. "If ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye?" Temporary help is often rendered in the expectation that, if ever we are in the same need, we shall only need to ask, and receive like aid. I lend you an axe, and you will one day lend me a saw. You borrow my pail, and you will lend me your flat-iron: a neighbourly sort of barter, which goes on all around, and ought to go on; but there is nothing very wonderful in it, for, after all, it is a sort of laying by in store, making your neighbour your banker for awhile. I help you and you help me,—a very proper thing to do, and the more of such brotherly and neighbourly co-operation the better, but still there is nothing so very virtuous in it. "What thank have ye, for sinners also lend to sinners to receive as much again." You as a Christian are to rise to something higher than this—namely, to be ready to help without the expectation of being helped again, ready to aid those who, you are certain, could not help *you*, who are too poor ever to come to your rescue; ay, and ready to help those who would not help you if they could, who may even return your kindness with words of falsehood and acts of unkindness. Can you rise to this? for this is to be a Christian, this is to be like your heavenly Father, who sendeth his rain upon the just and upon the unjust, who causeth his sun to shine upon the field of the churl as well as upon the garden of the liberal; who gives, and gives, and gives, and receives nothing in return. It is the glory of God that he is too great, too full, too glorious to be dependent upon us; an ever-flowing fountain, pouring forth incalculable torrents of infinite blessing upon the sons of men. After our measure we are to be the same: we are to aspire to the higher happiness of which our Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Here is the dignity, the heavenliness of happiness, not to be receiving from others, but to be freely distributing to them. May God help us to imitate our God in doing good, hoping for nothing again.

Thus, brethren, I think I have shown you that there are certain good things in the world which, nevertheless, do not reach to the standard of Christian virtue. This holds good of *all religious actions*. You go to the house of God; so do the heathens go to the house of their god. You spend certain times in prayer; so do the Mahommedans. You are very devout; so are Parsees. You are known to be a religious man; so were a great many who have turned out to be rogues. You are a deacon, or other church officer; yes, so were certain bank directors, who were none the more honest for that. But you are a preacher, yes, and so was Judas, who hanged himself, and so went to his own place. Religious acts count for nothing unless there is a true heart at the back of them. These things ought we to have done, but if we leave heart work undone nothing is done. Sinners also perform their religious acts, and besides these, some of them exhibit many external virtues, and yet they manifestly fail to approach the standard of Christian virtue. The road is the same, and men may travel in it apparently in the same direction, and yet they may be journeying with totally different motives: the first may be on the King's business, the next may be a footpad, and the third an escaped convict running from justice. The same thing may be done

by a hundred different men, and apparently done in the selfsame way, and yet only one of them may be doing it in God's way, and doing it with the sincere motive of honouring and glorifying God: the ninety-nine, though studiously aiming to make the outward action correct, may, nevertheless, fail as to acceptance with God; because their motive and spirit are altogether wrong.

Oh, it shames me when I sit down and look over my life and enquire, "Is this a life a Christian ought to live?" Does not the same question arise in your minds? Do you not feel in many points that even unconverted men have excelled you? Do you not know some persons who are no Christians who are, nevertheless, more patient than you in the endurance of pain? Do you not know unbelievers who are generous to a high degree, and show much of self-sacrifice in helping their poor neighbours? Do you not know men whose devotion to science is greater than your devotion to Christ? Are there not within your knowledge persons who have loved their country better than you have loved your Lord? Do not these thoughts provoke you to something better? They make me blush, and cause my heart to weep. What manner of person ought I to be, when those who do not profess to know the mysteries of everlasting love rise to such courage in battle, such endurance in pushing over seas of ice? What ought I to become when my Lord calls me to be his disciple indeed? Where are the fruits of my discipleship? What am I doing to bring him honour? If even a text like this staggers me, and I say it is a hard lesson, where, where must I be in the sight of God, who sees all my failures?

II. Secondly, dear friends, I want you to notice that CHRISTIAN VIRTUE IS IN MANY RESPECTS EXTRAORDINARY, AND MIGHT BE CALLED HEROIC. To illustrate this, I will confine myself to the gospel according to Luke. In the passage that we have been reading we have evidently a form of virtue which is quite out of the ordinary range of men's thoughts. It concerns *love*. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." In the point of love, kindness, consideration for men's needs, and desire to do good, the Christian life is to rise above every other, till it becomes sublime. Heathen moralists recommended kindness, but they did not suggest its being lavished upon enemies. I have been somewhat amused by the caution of Cicero. He says, "Kindness must not be shown to a youth, nor to an old man: not to the aged, because he is likely to die before he can have an occasion to repay you the benefit; and not to the young man, for he is sure to forget it." Those of us who are middle-aged may value the orator's generosity as we like, but we may reflect that he only recommends its exercise towards us because we are likely to be good debtors, and pay back what we receive, perhaps, with interest. That gentle laugh which ripples over the congregation is the best refutation of such barefaced selfishness. Our Lord bids us seek no reward from men, and he assures us that then a greater reward will come. We shall by shunning it secure it. We shall find a reward in being un-rewarded. See how our Lord puts it: "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed,

the lame, and the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Next, read Luke ix. 54, 55, and you will see that the Christian is to rise above human passion in the matter of *gentleness*. James and John, when Christ was not received by the Samaritan villagers, said, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But Jesus rebuked them and said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. And they went to another village." A Christian should be ready to give way; he should be quiet, peaceable, gentle. If in trying to do good, he wishes to bless certain people, and they refuse to hear him, let him not grow indignant and denounce the offenders, but let him change the scene and carry his message to those who perhaps are hungry for it. He may go round again very shortly to those who repulsed him and find them in a better mind. Be gentle, brother; soft words are hard to answer. They refused you at first, try them again; at any rate, be not provoked, for then they will have conquered *you*. Christians ought to be the gentlest beings under heaven; they are sent forth as lambs among wolves, and they are called to be harmless as doves. Such meekness will astonish and amaze their adversaries, and crown the religion of Jesus with honour.

In the elevation of *his joy* the Christian is also to rise above all other men. He may rejoice as they do in the common bounties of providence, but that joy is to hold very secondary rank. Even in his own success as a Christian worker he takes but measured satisfaction. Read Luke x. 20, and see what is the source of his truest delight: "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather, rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Is not a believer a wonderful being, since even spiritual power and victory over the devil do not excite him, but he finds his joy in a fact which is quite out of himself and fixed by the unchangeable decree of God?

The Christian is heroic, next, in his *fearlessness*. Turn to the twelfth chapter, verse 4, and there find Christ saying to his disciples: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." The genuine Christian stands not in fear of public opinion, and dreads not the frown of those whom God frowns upon.

The true believer is to be willing to bear reproach; ay, and to bear much more than reproach, as saints of God have done time out of mind. So far from flinching from suffering, we are not even to give it a thought as to how we shall speak if we are brought before kings and rulers, for a part of the Christian's heroism is to lie in his calm self-possession. See how the Lord puts it in the eleventh verse: "When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The same man who is so gentle that if men will not listen to him he goes elsewhere, is so steadfast that he cannot be silenced: bold as a lion he stands before his accusers, and he is not troubled as to how he shall put words together, for he relies upon the indwelling Spirit whom the

world cannot receive because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. Relying upon that Spirit he speaks when the time comes to speak, and it is the right word, as his adversaries are compelled to confess; or he is silent while it is time to be silent, and even in that silence there is an awe which is felt by those round about him. After this fashion is he to play the man.

See how far the true believer is lifted up above the world, as you turn to Luke xii. 22, where the Lord bids us cultivate a holy *ease of heart* as to all temporal things. The rich man finds his wealth in his bursting barns, but the believer finds his treasure in the all-sufficiency of his God. The Saviour says, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." See, brethren, the Spirit of God is to lift us up above all fretful cares: we are to feel that the Father will provide for us in this world, and that Jesus will never leave us comfortless. Because he is our Shepherd, and we cannot want, we are to dwell at ease, and lie down in green pastures, like a peaceful, restful flock. Covetousness is not to approach us, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. The desire to heap together a vast mass of wealth prevents the enjoyment of that which is already gained, and this must not come near an heir of heaven. As to temporal things, we are to be constantly calm, content, grateful, and trustful, relying upon the bounty of our God. This freedom from anxiety constitutes a main part of the Christian character, and is so uncommon as to lift its possessor far above men of the world.

Another point in which Christian heroism is seen is in *humility* and in delight in service. Turn to the fourteenth chapter and see our Lord's directions to his disciples not to seek out the highest, but rather the lowest room, for, saith he, "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Habitually a Christian man is to have a modest esteem of himself. He is never to be known as one who is forward, self-seeking, self-asserting. Men who are highly esteemed by themselves are seldom justified by the verdict of their fellow-men. No, a Christian man is to be one who is ready to do anything for the good of others, however lowly the service. He will wash the saints' feet. He will be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord, if he may but serve his brethren and glorify his Master. "Where are these Christian people?" asks a hearer. "Where are these good and humble people? I cannot find them." Are you not one of them yourself? If you are not, make the confession, and go before God and ask him to set you right, and when you are of a lowly, loving spirit yourself you will find others of a like mind. I must admit that they are not easy to come at, but when you are meek and lowly you will find them, on the principle that like draws to like, and birds of a feather flock together. That is not the Christian spirit which turns even the kingdom of heaven into an arena for ambition, but that man has the mind of Christ who becomes the servant of all for Christ's sake. That is not the Christian spirit which, under pretence of seeking liberty in the church, craves after lordship and self-display. Those who are

under this influence will have no rule in the church of God except their own rule: they are too heady and high-minded to submit themselves to those who are over them in the Lord. The spirit of Christianity is lowly, yielding, easily to be entreated, seeking not itself. This is a chief point in the peculiarity of the peculiar people.

Furthermore, there should be about the Christian *a faith* which there is not in any other. (See Luke xvii. 6.) He should have an eye to see that which is invisible, and an arm to lean on that which he cannot feel. He should act upon facts which others may accept as theories but would never dream of risking a shilling upon it. Believers, ye are to be the men who can say to mountains, "Become plains," and to sycamine trees, "Be ye plucked up by the roots." Ye are to work miracles, not physical and material, but spiritual and mental, which are not less, but even more marvellous than wonders of healing or resurrection.

The next verse of this seventeenth chapter shows us that Christians are to be men of *service*. They are not to think that they came into the world to sit at a banquet, but they are to wait on their Master while he sits at the table. Too many appear to consider that the services of the sanctuary are intended merely to *feed* them: they never look upon the house of God as a barracks for soldiers, or a place where workmen come together to sharpen their tools; they only regard it as a sacred *battery*, a spiritual larder, or a heavenly refectory, where much is to be received and little or nothing returned. O brothers and sisters, we must get out of the cramping influence of the spirit which makes even religion a selfish provision for ourselves, and we must scorn that skulking away from trouble and fatigue which creeps over men of growing years and increasing wealth. We are to serve, not to recline at our ease. What are we at that we are so anxious to rest ourselves and benefit ourselves? The Lord Jesus Christ would not have us always be asking, "How can I be happy? How can I obtain spiritual enjoyment?" Servants are not supposed to spend their time in doing their own pleasure and seeking their own profit. A man-servant whose whole time was taken up with watching his own health would be of small value to his employer. Even so we have something else to do beyond watching over our own inward feelings. To snatch a brand from the burning is better than to warm your own hands; to feed a hungry soul with the bread of heaven is a far higher deed than to eat the fat and drink the sweet yourself. There is more joy in plunging your arm up to the elbow in the mire to find a jewel for Christ than in washing one's idle hands with the scented soap of respectable propriety. Oh, to get clean away from all idea of self-seeking in religion. We are first of all saved by *grace* like drowning mariners snatched from the deep, but afterwards we are taught to man the life-boat ourselves for the rescue of others from destruction. Christianity finds me a soldier wounded in battle, and it heals my wounds, but it does far more than that: it girds me with *armour*, it gives me a sword, it teaches me to fight, and it makes a hero of me if I yield myself to its full power. God grant it may do this for every one of us.

¶ I will now close with the reflection that THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
GIVES THE MOST HEROIC LIFE. Bear with

me while I show you this in a few sentences. First, *the economy of grace* requires it. You and I must have been chosen to lead a life higher than that of ordinary men, or else why all this noise and stir at all? We see heaven and earth and hell in motion; God vacates his throne and becomes a man; immortality puts on flesh and blood and dies; the Holy Ghost comes to dwell in these bodies of clay, while angels look on and wonder; surely here is the groundwork and argument of something supremely good. See you that angel bright and sparkling like a flame of fire, what trouble did it cost the Creator to make him? A thought sufficed to do it; God willed it, and there stood the helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim before him in all their glittering ranks. What will that creature be, which has been the subject of eternal purposes, which has cost the Father the heart-pang of giving up his only Son, cost the Son a bloody sweat, cost the Spirit the exercise of his omnipotence? Such a creature you and I shall yet become. We are on the road to it. Great things ought to come of us if that is what we are, and are growing to. May this thought nourish us to the highest life.

Think again, brethren, we are helped to holy heroism by *the reward* which it brings: for our blessed Master, though he bids us spurn the thought of reward on earth, yet tells us that there is a reward in the thing itself. Just follow my text in the thirty-fifth verse: "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great." What reward? Why, the reward of having done good. This is quite enough. If you go to your brother who has treated you so badly, and say, "Brother, we are going to be friends," and you manage to heal all wounds, you will not want any other reward. You will sleep sweetly at night, and the music that awakes you in the morning will be sweet as the bells of heaven. Suppose you have an enemy, and persistently do him all the good you can, you will not wish to be paid for it; it is such a grand thing to have acted like a Christian that you will be blessed in the deed. I believe that martyrs at the stake when they stood and burned for Christ felt in every pang a thousand times rewarded by possessing the grace which enabled them to endure to the end. They felt, "We are doing the right thing, we are testifying to the truth of our beloved Lord," and if they had possessed a thousand lives they would cheerfully have laid all down for Jesus. Therefore, do not be so mercenary as to expect to be paid in dirty bronze and tarnished silver, but ask to find your recompense in the spirit by which you are led to do good, and in the smile of your heavenly Father.

Then, mark you this to fire your ambition: you shall be children of the Highest. Those who can rise into the heroic life shall *be as God*. The gentle, patient, peaceable, kind, loving, forgiving, affectionate, these shall be known to be the sons of God; and is this nothing? Oh, if there is a grain of nobility in your natures you will make this the highest ambition of your lives, to be like God. What is more than that?

We are expected to be like God because we are his children. "Ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." We expect to see something of the father in the child. If we are children of God we ought to do what others never think of.

If you are the children of God remember what a *Brother* you have, and what an example he has set you. He disdained to live unto himself, for he left the throne of glory to come down to Bethlehem's manger, to a carpenter's shop, and to a servant's life. The other night I heard read at family prayer the story of our Lord at the supper table: Jesus knowing that he came from God, and went to God, took a towel and girded himself and began to wash his disciples' feet. Ah, when I thought of him whom all heaven worships, our blessed, blessed Master, actually coming round with a basin to wash the disciples' feet, I felt my eyes fill with tears, and I sympathised with Peter when he cried, "Dost thou wash my feet?" It seemed a stoop too great for our Lord and King thus to act a menial's part. Is there anything which can seem too mean for you and me after beholding such condescension? If that sight touch you not, let me remind you of a further scene: he went into Gethsemane, and there he knelt and prayed for you and me until he was covered with a gory sweat, and great drops of blood followed each other to the ground. Is there any pain that we would not face, is there any reproach we could not bear after this for his dear sake? Does not that rouse you? Will you after this be proud and claim honour of your brethren, and grow angry if it be refused? Come with me once again, for he goes to the cross, and there he hangs. It is your Lord, remember! See, the iron passes through his hand: it is your Lord who is thus maimed! The nails tear through his feet: the feet of your Lord! He wears a diadem as monarch, but it is a coronet of thorns: it is your Lord who is thus crowned! He wears crimson, too; but it is his own blood; and he is your own Lord! He has not a rag else, for they have stripped him; yes, stripped and scourged your Lord! And they are hissing at him, jesting at his prayers, and scoffing at his cries:—all this at your Lord! And what of you? The other day you were ashamed to own that you were his disciple. Are you not disgusted at such cowardice? You were silent the other day when sinners were blaspheming him: you were niggardly when his poor people needed help; you refused to give when his church and his cause knocked at your door. You would not forgive a fellow Christian the other day, and you parted company with one who had been your friend for years, and all for a hot word; and yet you call yourself a Christian! Yes, and I, too, am a Christian, and have my own private cause for self-humiliation; and that is our Master bleeding there. How can we bear to look him in the face? What sorry disciples we are! O blessed Master, let thy blood drop on us till thou hast blotted out these many faults of ours and made us like thyself. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke vi. 12—19.

HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 262, 263.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TRUTHFULNESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

“O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?”—Jeremiah v. 3.

THE allusion is not to doctrinal truth, or truth in the abstract, but to practical truth as it should exist in the hearts and lives of men. It might be read “O Lord, are not thine eyes upon truthfulness?” or “upon faithfulness?” The Lord bade them produce a single truthful man in all Jerusalem, and Jeremiah answers that if truth were to be found the Lord himself best knew where it was, for his eyes were ever upon it.

In this chapter you must have noticed when I was reading it that we have a fearful description of the condition of things in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. We have also a most melancholy set of pictures of untruthful men, which are drawn to the life, with a grimly graphic touch which strangely reminds me of the series of Hogarth's sketches known as “the Rake's Progress.” They hold the mirror up not only to the life, but to the heart of the men of the times. Jerusalem was rotten at the core: the nation was deceitful through and through. In the twenty-seventh verse we read, “As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit.” They had schemes without number, plots without end, and tricks without limit, moving about in their minds like birds herded together in a little cage. What worse could be said? When a heart is untruthful, and crooked, when uprightness has gone from it, then is it prepared to be the seed-plot of every evil thing. Any crime is possible to a liar. He who is rotten with falsehood will rend at the touch of temptation. A man of bold, outspoken vice, is far more hopeful than a sly, cunning hypocrite.

These untruthful people began with *acting untruthfully towards their fellow-men*. God challenges them to run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see whether they could find a man that executed judgment and sought the truth. He says that they were not even commonly honest towards those persons whose necessities generally plead for favour. “They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, and the right of the needy do they not judge.” They were not upright in cases where they should have been charitable, but they cheated even

the widow and the orphan : when a man has once become a rogue all will be fish that comes to his net, and he will as soon rob the fatherless as anybody else. Greed destroys common humanity. Cheating of men is a very common form of deceit, both in the open puffery of trade and the more quiet deceptions of daily life ; traders frequently think it useless to tell the honest truth to one another, and so society becomes a network of craft and falsehood. It is a dreadful thing when men are not to be trusted, when their word is but wind, when without its being to their advantage they would as soon lie as not.

God save us from that form of untruthfulness, since it leads on to something worse : for in the second verse it is said that these people were *faithless even to their oaths*. "They say 'Jehovah liveth,' but surely they swear falsely." They dared to take that most sacred of all names upon their lips, and call God to witness to a lie. He who has gone as far as falsehood will not always stop at perjury. That which makes our blood run cold to think of may yet be perpetrated by us if we take the first steps in deceit. This being so—that they could perjure themselves—it is little wonderful that they were *not faithful to their marriage vows*. I need not read the strong expression in which the prophet sets forth the fornication and adultery which abounded in his day, when they did not hesitate to bring grief into their houses and the utmost sorrow and misery to their wives by indulging their passions ; for he that is traitorous to God will soon be treacherous to all domestic ties. What can we expect when a man is irreligious but that he will soon be impure, if he is not that already ? I have marked it often, that when men who profess to be religious decline from the ways of God it often happens that, if you track them home—not to the home of their wife and children—but to their favourite haunts, you will discover a corruption of life of which the external observer little dreamed. The judgment day alone will reveal how many hearths have been desolated, how many hearts have been broken by the cruel unfaithfulness of husbands who have crushed those whom they vowed to cherish. This is one of the meanest forms of falsehood.

False to their marriage ties as well as to everything else, it is small wonder that they were *false to the plain teachings of providence*, for it is written that "they have belied the Lord and said, It is not he." When God had been chastening they said, "It is not God. It is bad luck : it is fate : time and chance happen unto all." They would not see the hand of God. Do you wonder that when men have corrupt and crooked hearts they should not be able to see God's plain and truthful proceedings, or that when they do see them they deny them ? "There is no God," say they ; "or if there be a God, he does not meddle with the things of daily life." "It is cant and hypocrisy," they say, "to talk about our troubles coming from God ; he does not interfere with human affairs. The laws of matter, the principles of nature—these govern all things. God has set the world going like a clock, and left it to its own wheels and pendulum ; or, better still, he has wound it up like a watch, and put it under his pillow, and has gone to sleep. How doth God know ? And is there knowledge in the Most High ?" These men were liars, I say, and all who talk in their fashion are liars too. These wretches hesitated not to lie against the eternal light of that thrice

blessed providence which shines in all the lives of men,—ay, shines like the daylight to men who are commonly honest and are willing to see. It needs no great learning to perceive the presence of God all around us; the greatest need is an upright, candid mind.

This being so, these men *cast off God himself*; the first step is to cast him out of the field of action, and the next is to have done with him altogether, and to substitute other gods. According to the nineteenth verse, these people had forsaken God and served strange gods. Superstition follows on the heels of unbelief, for bad men are frequently amongst the most ardent votaries of superstition. Cast off a pure God, and you want a god of some sort, and so every man to his liking manufactures a god for himself. The earthy mind of the heathen makes a god of mud. The man whose soul is bound up in his bags makes the golden calf his deity. The dreamy thinker evolves an airy nothing out of his own imaginings. The free-liver invents a God who has no justice, and consequently takes no vengeance upon sin. Man looks for God, and thinks he sees him when he sees himself in a glass. By nature every man is his own deity, he worships his own image. It is only the man that is pure in heart that can see God, for what the man is that will his god be to him: but these men cast off God and set up superstitious beliefs of their own, and hence false gods were their choice.

And, worst of all, if worse could possibly be, when a man once gives himself up to a deceitful heart he gets to be a *destroyer of others*. Notice that twenty-sixth verse. "They lay wait, as he that setteth snares; they set a trap, they catch men." Not content with being lost themselves, they became the servants of Satan to destroy others. Oh, it is a lamentable thing to think that there are persons whose lips drop moral plagues among youth whenever they speak; whose conduct and example are such that they might well be put in an everlasting quarantine, and shut away like lepers, especially from youth, lest they should infect the rising race. I hope that I do not speak to anyone here who is a man-catcher—who sets traps to catch men, aiming to pervert, to corrupt, to mislead, to beguile. Such fiends in human form have surely reached the last stage of corruption when they not only sin themselves, but are the creators of sin in others.

Look well at this picture of the progress of the deceitful. They begin with being dishonest to their fellow-men, and at last it comes to this—that they become Satan's commission agents, trappers for the devil, fowlers who ensnare men as bird-catchers take the winged fowl.

This was the state of affairs in Jeremiah's time. We have not, I trust, quite such a condition of things among us to-day, as a plague universally prevalent, but we have much of the disease of deceit in all quarters, high and low, and to what a head it may come time alone can show.

The appeal of Jeremiah was that of a holy man to God. He says, in effect, "O Lord, are not thine eyes such that thou canst *detect* what is truth and what is deceit? Thou spiest out the truth. That which is brought to thee as worship, thou canst tell whether it be sincere or not. Thou canst see the pretender's face through his mask, and read his heart through his outward profession. Thine eyes spy out the facts which lie beneath the covering of appearances. Thou canst discern

between the righteous and the wicked." Yes, God is the detector of shams and counterfeits, and by his infallible judgment the precious shall be severed from the vile; "for the Lord is a God of judgment, and by him actions are weighed."

"Are not thy eyes upon the truth?" That is, "Dost thou not *discover* truthfulness wherever it exists?" The prophet had bidden them go through the streets and search for an honest man; but he in effect cries, "Lord, thou knowest where he is if there be one yet remaining." God has not to search with a lantern to find a truthful man, for "the Lord knoweth them that are his." Lot in Sodom is like a lone bird on the mountains, but the Lord perceived him. The truthful ones are often hidden from mankind, but the eyes of God are steadfastly fixed upon them, as it is written, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry." The Lord can detect imposture, but he can also discover truthfulness, and we may be sure he will do it.

The prophet also means that God *approved* of that which he discovered. "Are not thine eyes upon the truth?" Thou wilt not look upon hypocrisy; it is thine abhorrence, and thou wilt not turn thine eyes that way. Thine eyes burn like fire to consume those that would impose upon thee; but as for those that are sincere of heart, thou dost love them, and watch over to do them good. They are never out of thy sight. They leave not thy presence; they bask in thy smile. O Lord, are not thy eyes upon truthfulness, to approve of it, to help it, to defend it, to vindicate it even to the last?

Let this which has gone before stand for a preface; and now let us come to the practical instructions which our text should yield us.

I. I think that there are four lessons, and the first is THE UTTER FOLLY OF ALL PRETENCE.

Hypocrisy is *useless* altogether, for God sees through it. You may by great cleverness delude your fellow-men for a while, though you will find it a poor and difficult business; but you can never deceive God. It is not that you may deceive the Lord for a little time, and then afterwards be discovered. No; you cannot mislead him, even for an instant. He reads us as we read a book. He sees through us as we see through a sheet of clear glass. The instantaneous imagination which flits across the mind like a stray bird, leaving nor track nor trace, God observes it, and knows it altogether. To pretend to be other than we are before God is a hideous madness. Surely, Satan himself must laugh in his sleeve at those who come before God with words of piety on their lips when there is no devotion in their hearts: it is the comedy of a tragic blasphemy. It is utterly useless. It is a waste of time and energy. It were infinitely better that you were doing something else than dress and paint and put on ornaments to go before God who sees you in your spiritual death to be nothing but naked corruption. May God grant that we may never play the fool in this way; for playing the fool it is, to hope to appear otherwise before him than what we really are deep down in our hearts.

Nor is it only useless: it is *injurious*. For any man to hope that he can stand better with God by speaking more softly than his heart would suggest, or by using words which his soul does not really enter into, is to be doing the reverse of what he thinks to do. You spoil your sacrifice

if there be any tincture of the odious gall of hypocrisy about it. Oh, if the Pharisee did but know that when he made broad the borders of his garments, and put on his phylactery, and sounded a trumpet before him in the streets, he was not pleasing God, but was actually provoking him, surely he would have sense enough to mend his ways. Everything about you and me that is unreal God hates, and hates it more in his own people than anywhere else. If in prayer we use expressions that really do not come from our hearts, or if in talking to our fellow-men we stick feathers in our caps to be a little taller and finer than we really are, it is abhorrent in the sight of God. He would sooner have us come before him in all the nakedness and shame of our first parents, and stand there and confess our crime, than dress ourselves out in the fig-leaves of formality and hypocrisy. Pretence is injurious to men as well as useless: it is not only an empty wind, but it is as the breath of pestilence.

Moreover, pretence is *deadening*, for he that begins with tampering with truth will, as I have already shown you, go on from bad to worse. He may say at first, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" and yet, like a dog, he will go into all manner of filthiness before he has done. Let a man once begin to tamper with his conscience, to play tricks with words, and especially to trifle with the solemnities of religion, and there is no knowing what he will be. Oh, I charge my tongue, as I charge yours, never to use a word which is not true when speaking with God or for God, for falsehood before the Judge of all the earth is blasphemy. When we think of him in our secret souls we must be careful not to allow a false idea, for it is dreadful even to think untruth before God. Falsehood in common life must not be tolerated for a moment. Once begin to sail by the wind of policy and trickery and you must tack, and then tack again and again; and as surely as you are alive, you will yet have to tack again; but if you have the motive force of truth within you, as a steamboat has its own engine, then you can go straight in the teeth of wind and tempest. The man of truth is the true man. That is the man to honour God in life and death. That is the man to fear nothing and win everything. He is the man whom the Lord accepts, who feels that if the heavens fall it is not for him to prop them with a lie if that could make them stand. He is the man who is resolved to be before God and before man just what he is, wearing his heart upon his sleeve, and throwing back every shutter of his soul that the divine eye may inspect all! "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, in whose spirit there is no guile:" this freedom from guile is a main ingredient of the blessedness. The conscience must be clear and honest, or it will gather dust and defilement every day, and the man will wax worse and worse.

And there is this to be added,—that falsehood and pretence before God are *damnable*. I cannot use a less forcible word than that. Pretence condemns men fatally, and finally if it be continued in. I have noticed in reference to conversions one noteworthy fact. I would not wish to assert as a general rule that which happens to be the result of my personal observation; but be the rule what it may, all the world over, this one thing is a statement of my own experience,—I have constantly seen almost all sorts of people converted—great blasphemers, pleasure-

seekers, thieves, drunkards, unchaste persons, and hardened reprobates, but rarely have I seen a man converted who has been a thorough-paced liar. I might have been still more correct if I had said *never to my knowledge* have I seen a wily, crafty man of cunning become a disciple of Jesus. The heart which is crammed with craft and treachery seems as if it had passed out of the reach of grace. You remember that the ground which brought forth fruit when the sower went forth to sow is called "honest and good ground." There was nothing good in it spiritually, but it was honest, true, sincere, and so far "good." Give me plain-spokenness and I have hope of a man. If a fellow can look you straight in the face you can deal with him. An open-hearted sailor, honest as the noonday sun, puts on no imitation of religion, but is evidently a bad fellow, a very bad fellow, and yet, when the grace of God enables him to listen to the gospel, how he sucks it in, and with what heartiness he responds to it. How very different it is with that clever gentleman who always attends a place of worship, and knows how to raise quibbles, and to answer texts of Scripture, and to blunt the edge of any truth that touches his conscience! You know him, do you not? He is a great sorrow to me. What a mischief-maker he is in all sorts of circles, and what a fetcher and carrier of religious gossip! He slips in and out of gospel services like a dog in a fair, and nothing ever comes of his running about. He is not good enough to be good to himself. How can you get at him? He knows all you can tell him, and yet knows nothing in truth. He is harder to handle than an eel, for he is all twists and turns. The man is shut up in armour, he is cased all over with his lying self-deceitfulness, and the arrows of truth are blunted when they touch his harness. May none of you ever grow into the like of him.

I charge you, above all things, be true. If Baal be God, serve him, but say so, and do it in broad daylight. If the devil be your master, do not disown him; but do not be one of those mean sneaks who will serve God on Sundays, and the devil when it pays them better. Be not one who will profess to be a Christian to be respectable, and under the cover of that will indulge in the most disreputable vices. Such a man, though never out of the reach of the infinite grace of God—I never meant to say that—is usually the kind of man that the election of God does not light upon, and that the grace of God seldom visits. Amidst a very large and wide observation I have noticed the fact which I have stated, and, therefore, I bid all pretenders look to themselves lest their bands be made strong, and their death-irons be riveted on their wrists before they know of it. I would say to young persons beginning life, whatever errors you fall into, whatever mistakes you make, ay, and into whatever transgressions you may wander, *be true*. Wear no cloak of hypocrisy. Profess not to be what you are not; never dare to jeopardize your soul by a falsehood. Remember, no way to hell is surer than the way of deceit, for it is written, "All liars shall have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." He that loveth and maketh a lie shall be cast away from the presence of God and from the glory of his power.

May the Holy Spirit of truth bless this warning as to the folly of making pretences and forging falsehoods before God.

III. Our second lesson is, THE GREAT VALUE OF TRUTHFULNESS. "O how are not thine eyes upon truthfulness?"

The great value of it is this—that it alone is regarded by God in religion: his eyes are upon that which is truthful about us, and all the rest is not worthy of his notice. For instance, suppose I say, "I repent." The question is,—Do I really and from my heart repent for sin? Is there a change in my mind with regard to sin, so that what I once loved I now detest? Is it so?—for only that part of repentance which is of the heart is accepted before God. Tears, sighs, groans—these are mere wind and water, and go for nothing if the heart be not broken. The same holds good in reference to faith. Many may say, "I believe," as thousands say their creed,—“I believe in the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,” and so on. But do you trust in God with your whole heart? Are you truly and sincerely believing in God and God's word, and God's Son, and God's gospel?—for, if not, all your professed faith is useless. True faith the Lord accepts and smiles upon, but it is a real thing, and dwells deeper down than the lips and the throat. As to love to Christ, you know how very easy it is to sing sweet hymns about love to Jesus, and yet how few are living so as to prove their attachment to the Redeemer. We say—

“O love divine, how sweet thou art!

When shall I find my willing heart

All taken up by thee?”

and so on. But are we knit to Jesus? Is it heart-work? Does our very soul cleave to Jesus? Do we follow after him as the thirsty hart after the water-brook, resolved to find him, and to abide by him, or to die in the attempt? Lip-love is little better than hate in the esteem of Christ. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Christ in thy very soul to-night?—for, if thou dost not, all talk about love is but a mockery of his name. Simon, son of Jonas; hast thou real practical love to Jesus? Thou canst sing, Simon; but canst thou, wilt thou feed thy Master's sheep, and so give evidence of thy love? Simon, son of Jonas, thou art very eager and fervent, but dost thou so intensely love Jesus as to care for his little ones and feed his lambs? This shall be the test of thy love. This is coming to the point.

The same truth bears upon all the ordinances of religion. When we professed to worship God, how much praise was there in the song? As much as the heart made. There was no true praise of God in the noise of that set of pipes and pedals and keys and stops. I judge not those who find these noises helpful to devotion, but assuredly the sounds themselves are no part of divine worship. God does not accept praise from inanimate machinery. What cares he about what noise the air makes when it passes through pipes and valves? Even our singing is no better: it is but the sound of air as it is passing through the throat. What is there in that? No, the Lord only regards heart-singing; and the song of the soul is the amount and quantity of our song that was accepted of the Lord.

As to prayer. “A large prayer meeting.” Yes, but the largeness of the number of attendants is not always a gauge of the quantity and power of prayer. The quantity of heart in the prayer decides its

quality. The same is it with baptism and with the Lord's Supper. The test is, How far is this done as unto the Lord? How far does the soul enter into the meaning of the outward symbols, and get at God in the use of them. A plunge in this baptistery is no better than a bath you may take in your own home; and the bread and wine on yonder table are no better than what you shall eat to-morrow at your own table, unless your heart comes to the baptism, rejoicing in being buried with Christ, and unless your heart comes to the table that you may feast upon his flesh and drink his blood. Let this stand, therefore, as the great test and gauge of all religion. We have no lack of external religion in these days. There, fill a cauldron with it! Set the great pot upon the fire! It goes in steam; see how it flies away! And what is left? Ah, so little that you may search with a microscope to discover any solid residuum. Those few grains at the bottom of the pot are, however, all that is real, and all that will remain in the day of testing. Such is the stern fact, that God values the truthfulness and the sincerity of our actions, the heartiness and the depth of them; and he does not regard what we do unless truth appears in it in all its forms.

This is equally true of all your private worship. That daily reading of the chapter is a very excellent thing; but do you read with your soul as well as with your eyes? That morning prayer and that evening prayer, those few minutes snatched in the middle of the day—these are good. I will not wish you to alter the regularity of your devotion, but still it may all be clockwork, godliness with no life in it. Oh, for one single groan from the heart! It may have more prayer in it than an army of collects and liturgies, though there may be prayer there too if the heart uses them before the living God with sincerity.

The value of truthfulness will be seen, because even in its lowest development God regards it. I think I might call that its lowest development which is spoken of in the first verse of the chapter, "Go and see if there be any that seeketh truthfulness"—a man who feels that he is not all he wants to be, but yet he wishes to be truthful. The man who is here sought for is conscious of many faults; ay, and he feels that sometimes he is not perfectly candid and transparent, and therefore he hates himself, and watches the deceitful tendencies of his heart, and zealously seeks to be true. Oh, my dear friend, if you really are on the right tack, if you are trying to be truthful, if you are labouring to be quite honest before God, if you can say "I want genuine conversion, and real faith in Christ; I cannot put up with shams and hollow professions," then God accepts even that seeking after truth which is in your soul. May he keep you to that search by his divine Spirit till you come out into the clear, noonday light of the blessed truth as it is in Jesus.

It is evident that truth is regarded by God with acceptance and with pleasure wherever he sees it in the soul. My friend, you cannot pray in public as you would dearly like to do, but the few words you ever utter are hot from your heart. You cannot pray long, even in private, but your groan is sincere. When in secret you sigh, "Oh, that!" and "Ah!" and "Would that!" you mean those ejaculations. There is no sham in such cries of the heart. Your very soul goes in them, and God is pleased

with them. I would sooner have a little diamond than a block of granite ; and the Lord would sooner have the least morsel of truthfulness than the largest mass of pretensions, ostentatious religion.

How far, dear friend, are you anxious to be right with God ? Will you confess that you have sinned, and pray to have your sin blotted out by the Lord who sees it all ? How far do you wish that God should know all about you ? How far are you glad that there is a God ? How far are you anxious to get into the very light of God through Jesus Christ ? Be just so far as you truthfully wish to be like the true and living God, so far are you acceptable with the Most High. Oh, my dear brother, you may have only one talent, you may be very poor and very obscure, and to the church of God you may be almost unknown ; but if your soul goes up and down these streets crying to God to bless your fellow-men, if you speak only what you feel, and if you walk before the Lord with tenderness and brokenness of spirit, striving always to be true, he accepts and blesses you. If you are resting on Jesus Christ alone, and on his precious blood, though your faith is feeble, it is true, and God will bless you and save you, and you shall be his in the day when he makes up his jewels.

III. Thirdly, and very briefly, let us learn THE INFLUENCE OF TRUTHFUL MEN. The influence of really truthful men is too wonderful to be overlooked.

First, it is so great with God that one of them can save a city from destruction. Jerusalem was full of every evil, and God said, "Shall I not punish such a people as this ?" and yet he said, "If there be any that executeth judgment and seeketh truth, I will pardon it." He will save a city for the sake of one man. A parallel case is that in which the Lord was ready to pardon Sodom if but ten righteous had been found there. No doubt many a state has been preserved by the godly remnant in it, whom the majority would have exterminated had it been in their power. Hence the value of good men in bad localities. When you, my dear friend, go into a hamlet or village where there is no religion, do not be so very sorry at your position, for God may have great ends to be served by you. You are a lump of salt, and we do not want to keep the salt locked up by itself in the store-room. Where should the salt be put ? Why, where the corruption is likely to come, to preserve what is good, and to keep away that which is evil. I do believe that every now and then the Lord puts his hand into the salt-box of the Tabernacle and takes away some that do not wish to go ; but he says, "You must go for the benefit of mankind. I have need of salt over there and over there." In the happy church of which you are a member you would like always to remain ; but you must go, or else be useless : which is your own choice ? When the gospel chariot needs horses, will you for ever stand in the stall ? Are the oxen to-day, as in the days of Job, to be ploughing, and the asses to be feeding beside them for ever ? Let us not complain of being used, or of being placed where we can be used. All light must not be stored up in the sun ; scatter it over earth's poor lands that need it, lest all the trees of the field die in perpetual night. Surely you would not have all waters in the sea ; let them be exhaled, and let them return in silvery drops upon the soil to fertilize it. It must be so : God blesses us to make us

blessings. One good man can benefit a whole district. Ask of God that you may be so sincere, so truthful, that he may bless those round about you for your sake.

This influence is such that it never was attributed to any man on account of his riches. God never saved a city because there was a millionaire in it: it may be he has done the reverse. I never heard of any city being saved because there was a learned man in it, or an eloquent man in it, or because there was some great architect in it. No, no, no. The Lord is no respecter of persons, and he seeth not as man seeth. Sincerity before God is approved—true reliance upon Christ the Lord accepts: and for this he blesses us, and others through us.

And, mark you one other thing, dear friend. If you are upright before God, and you should happen to fall among people that despise you and reject you, it is a sad thing to have to say, but it is true, and a proof of the great influence of truthful men,—your word, when you speak for God, shall be like fire, and those round about you shall be wood, and it shall devour them. If you are not a savour of life to life to men, you will be a savour of death to death to them. And, mark this, if the Christian church sends missionaries, as I trust it yet may be aroused to do, in such numbers as it ought to send them, and if they be rejected we are not to conclude that therefore they have had no influence whatever; but, solemn and dreadful as it is, it is a fact that the preaching of the gospel shall be a testimony against the nations, and this shall fulfil the eternal purpose of the Lord. This all proves how strong is the influence of a truthful man. He is never a "chip in the porridge": there is a flavour in him. He that is sincerely right towards God is an efficient operating cause to which effects will be given; he cannot be a mere name or nullity, he must produce a result by his influence. He has force, and that force will, according to those he comes in contact with, turn to blessing, or else involve dread responsibility on those who resist it. Go, I pray you, then, dear friends, and live with God, and then be not afraid to live with men. Whoever they may be, God will make you to have power over them, and power with himself on their behalf.

IV. To close. Let me urge upon you, in the fourth place, the last lesson, namely—THE NECESSITY AND THE MEANS OF OUR BEING TRUE AND SINCERE BEFORE HIM WHOSE EYES BEHOLD TRUTHFULNESS. My first argument is this, *these times require it*. This is an age of tricks and policies. Oh, the puffs—the lying puffs—you meet with everywhere in books and broadsides innumerable. Everybody who goes abroad has need to carry a discount table with him to arrive at the truth of statements that are made. Be you, therefore, the more true. At the present moment there is going through this city of ours a lying influence of the worst kind on the behalf of Popery. I do not refer to the honest Catholic priest who comes bravely before us in his true colours, but I refer to those who should be Protestant ministers, who are beguiling the people and leading them gradually away from the doctrines of the Reformation and the gospel of Christ. The land swarms with Jesuistical churchmen, who look towards Canterbury but row towards Rome. Everywhere in society you meet with this disguised

fluence. Are there not hospitals not far from here that are simply *ouces* for proselytizing? Are there not sisterhoods which are more for *be making of Romanists* than they are for the healing of the sick? Why, *re* are surrounded with the givers of bribes of all kinds, whose one *esign* is to buy the people from the gospel. Is there a house but what *hese sisters and brothers* will enter if they possibly can, with gifts and *harities* so called, trying to buy the souls of the poor that they may *lange* them into the darkness which surrounds themselves? The *et* is *coming* closer to us than ever, and we cannot help feeling its *ashes*. Truth is the way to cut the net. Truth is a straight, honest, *harp-bladed sword*, and you have only to use it well, and away go the *ashes* of deceit. They may compass sea and land, and make their *rosalytes* if they will, but we will preach the everlasting gospel of the *lessed God*, and we will pray that all who love it shall live it, and be *uthful*, and be straight, whoever may be dark and mysterious. I would *ern* to make a convert to my persuasion by the concealment of any-
 thing that I believe, or by the putting it in a light that was not clear,
 or by bribery and scheming. If men cannot be saved by truth, they
tainly cannot be saved by falsehoods and tricks and policies. Let us
e true, then, brethren, all of us, and we may not question the result.
lest the Prince of Darkness with the light; he cannot stand against
 . Our times require our sincerity.

So does our God also require it. I have already spoken to this, and I
ead not repeat the solemn strain.

So do our souls require it. Our eternal welfare demands it. Oh, there
ust be no mistake about our being true before God, for when it
xnes to dying work, nothing will stand us then but sincerity. When
e comes to the light of the judgment-bar, where will the hypocrite
ppear? Ah, Judas, come and kiss thy Master again! Betray him
gain if thou darest! See how the traitor flies! He cannot bear the
ght; nor can men who are like him. May you never have one drop of
udas-blood within your veins. God take it away if it be there. It is
 a awful thing to live untruthfully. It is a sort of minor hell to go
out and feel that you have not spoken the straight thing in every
mpany. You spoke against a certain person very bitterly when he
as not present to defend himself, and now you have to meet him, and
o *feign* admiration of him in the presence of those who heard your
umer tirade. You are in an awkward position; a worm in a ring of
re could not wriggle more painfully. I thank God that I have learned
ways to say to a man what I think of him, and I do not find that
make enemies thereby; nay, those to whom I have said the hardest
ings are some of my best friends this day. I am sure that there
no plain path, no easy path, like that of downright truthfulness
wards our fellow-men, and there is no right path for eternity like that
downright honesty before the living God. May his Spirit work this
rellence in us, for he is the great author of truth in the inward parts. We
e all crooked from the birth. We go astray, speaking lies from our
ildhood. One of the first things that a child does is to speak what
not true; and parents sometimes teach their children to be false by
nging at their little deceits; yes, and they will tell their children
hat is not true, as a kind of sportive childish recreation. But this

will not do! We are all inclined to shuffle with God. It is hard work to bring us up to confession of sin at the first, and to make us pull off our pretty, cheating righteousness. We like to wear a rag or two of our own as long as we can. That base money of our own merit, those counterfeit farthings of supposed excellence, we do not like giving them all up. It is hard to get the last penny out of us, and make us bankrupts in the court of heaven, and yet to this we must surely come. When we do wrong, do we not feel a tendency to think that it was not so very wrong *in us*? The same offence in anybody else is horrible, and we go off to a neighbour to report what has been done, but in ourselves it is a venial error, not worth a censure. We hold the scales of justice, as we think, with blinded eyes; but we just wink a little beneath the handkerchief, and spy out an excuse for ourselves. We must get away from all this false judging, and yet we never shall unless the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth and light—shall create in us a new heart and a right spirit. He must keep us true, too, or we shall start aside like a broken bone.

This is the sum of the matter: we must come to God as poor, weak, helpless sinners, we must trust Christ to help us, and look to the divine Spirit to purge and cleanse us, and make us truthful, and then all will be well. Let this, then, be our prayer,—“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”

The Lord grant his blessing to these words, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah v.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—34 (Vers. II.), 641, 649.

Some years ago we prepared a large work for use at Family Prayer called “The Interpreter.” It is an arrangement of the Scriptures for daily reading, and short comments of our own are added. We are afraid that the present generation of our readers do not know of it. It cost us two years of steady labour, and we should like to see it largely used. It is a fine volume, and if purchased in the best binding it is a family treasure, to be handed down as a heirloom.—C. II. S.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOLY LONGINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times."—
Psalms cxix. 20.

ONE of the best tests of a man's character will be found in his deepest and heartiest longings. You cannot always judge a man by what he is doing at any one time, for he may be under constraints which compel him to act contrary to his true self, or he may be under a transient impulse from which he will soon be free. He may for awhile be held back from that which is evil, and yet he may be radically bad; or he may be constrained by force of temptation to that which is wrong, and yet his real self may rejoice in righteousness. A man may not certainly be pronounced to be good because for the moment he is doing good, nor may he be condemned as evil because under certain constraints he may be committing sin. A man's longings are more inward, and more near to his real self than his outward acts; they are more natural, in that they are entirely free, and beyond compulsion or restraint. As a man longeth in his heart, so is he. I mean not every idle wish, as I now speak, but strong desires of the heart: these are the true life-blood of a man's nature. You shall know whether you yourself be good or evil by answering this question, To which have you the greatest desire? Do you continually long after selfish pleasures? then are you evil, beyond all question. Do you sigh to be, and feel, and do that which is good?—is this the great aim of your life? Then in the core of your being there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. So then, dear hearers, your heart-longings may furnish you with excellent helps for self-examination, and I beg you to apply them at once. The things of the heart touch the root of the matter. Unbelievers are "a people that do err in their heart," and men truly find the Lord when they "seek him with their whole heart"; so that the heart is all-important, and its longings are among the surest marks of its condition.

Moreover, heart-longings are prophecies of what a man will be. It is not always capacity, if we could ascertain it, which will certify us as to what a man will do; for many men of large abilities achieve next to
No. 1,586.

nothing for want of inclination: their talents lie hidden in the earth, and, albeit they might have succeeded marvellously well in certain pursuits, they do nothing at all remarkable because they have no tendencies in that direction. An individual may have the means to relieve the poor, and yet never perform a charitable act from want of liberality; or he may have great mental powers and yet never produce a line of useful literature, because he is eaten up with idleness. But other things being equal, the longings of a man are a pretty sure index of what he will be: they cannot create capacity, but they develop it, they lead to the use of means for its increase, and they make the mind keen to seize on opportunities. By some means or other a man usually becomes what he intensely longs to be, especially if those desires are formed in early youth while yet the world is all before him where to choose. Hence our proverb: "The child is father to the man." Even in little children tastes and pursuits have been prophetic—the young artist sketches his sister in the cradle, the youthful engineer is busy with his boyish inventions. If his longings deepen, strengthen, and become vehement with the increase of his years, the young man's character is being surely moulded from within, and this is often a greater force than that of circumstances acting from without. Thus is it in spiritual things: we may form forecasts as to what we shall be from our burning and pressing desires. Desires are the buds out of which words and deeds will ultimately be developed. Spiritual desires are the shadows of coming blessings. What God intends to give us he first sets us longing for. Hence the wonderful efficacy of prayer, because prayer is the embodiment of a longing inspired of God because he intends to bestow the blessing. What are thy longings, then, my hearer? Dost thou long to be holy? The Lord will make thee holy. Dost thou long to conquer sin? Thou shalt overcome it by faith in Jesus. Art thou pining after fellowship with Christ? He will come and make his abode with thee. Does thy soul thirst, yea, even pant after God as the hart for the waterbrooks? Then thou shalt be filled with all his fulness; for all these longings are prophetic of that which is to be, even as the snowdrop and crocus and anemone foretell the approach of spring. I say not that it is so with all human wishes; for "the sluggard desireth and hath nothing," and many a man hath such evil cravings within his heart that it were contrary to the purity of God for him to grant them; but where there are intense, heart-breaking yearnings of a holy order depend upon it they are tokens of good things to come.

Where the grace of God reigns in the soul it makes a man become a stranger among his fellows, and it breeds in him peculiar affections and novel desires. The verse which precedes my text runs thus—"I am a stranger in the earth": he was a king surrounded by courtiers and friends, and yet he was not at home, but like one banished from his native land; and being thus strange in the earth he had a remarkable desire which worldlings could not understand, and that singular craving he here expresses—"My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times." Worldly men care nothing for the judgments of God; nay, they care nothing for God himself; but when a man becomes new born, a citizen of heaven, there grows up within his

spirit a spiritual appetite, of which he had felt nothing before, and he longs after God and his holy word. See to it, men and brethren, whether your souls cry out for God, for the living God; for again I say, by your longings you may test yourselves, by your heart's desires you may forecast your future, and by your hungerings and thirstings you may judge whether you are men of this world or citizens of the world to come. With such aids to self-judgment no man ought to remain in doubt as to his spiritual condition and eternal prospects.

In order that we may be helped to the right use of this text we shall handle it thus: first, we shall notice *the saint's absorbing object*—"Thy judgments"; secondly, we shall reflect upon *the saint's ardent longing*";—"my soul breaketh for the longing that it hath:" and, thirdly, we shall mention *the saint's cheering reflections*, which he may readily draw from the fact that he does experience such inward heart-break. Of these we will speak as the divine Spirit shall enable us, for without him we know nothing.

I. First, then, let us think of THE SAINTS' ABSORBING OBJECT. They long after God's judgments. The word "judgments" is here used as synonymous with the "word of God." It does not mean those judgments of God with which he smites sinners and executes the sentence of his law, but it refers to the revealed will or declared judgments of God. All through this long psalm the writer is speaking of the word of God, the law of God, the testimonies, the precepts, the statutes of God; and here the word "judgments" is used in the same sense. Perhaps I shall give you the meaning pretty readily if I remind you that the commandments and doctrines of the word are God's judgments about moral and spiritual things, his decisions as to what is right and what is wrong, and his solutions of the great problems of the universe. God's revealed plan of salvation is God's decision upon man's destiny, God's judgment of condemnation against human sin, and yet his judgment of justification on behalf of believing sinners, whom he regards as righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible may be rightly regarded as the book of divine judgments, the recorded sentences of the High Court of Heaven, the infallible decision of perfect holiness upon questions which concern our souls.

"This is the Judge that ends the strife
Where wit and reason fail;
Our guide through devious paths of life,
Our shield when doubts assail."

You may come to the Scriptures as men came to the throne of Solomon, where hard cases were at once met; yea, a greater than Solomon is here. Search God's word and you will have before your eyes the ultimate judgment of unerring truth, the last decree from the supreme authority, from which there is no appeal. The Bible contains the verdicts of the Judge of all the earth, the judgments of God, who cannot lie and cannot err. Thus God's word is rightly called his "judgments." It is a book not to be judged by us, but to be our judge: not a word of it may be altered or questioned, but to it we may constantly refer as to a court of appeal whose sentence is decisive.

David in our text tells us how he desired the Lord's judgments, or his

word ; by which we understand, first, that *he greatly revered the word*. He was not among those who regard the Bible as a very important portion of human literature, but as being no more inspired than the works of Shakespeare or Bacon. Little as David had of the Scriptures, he had a solemn reverence for what he had, and stood in awe of it. I have no objection to honest criticism of the keenest kind, but I am shocked at certain divines who cut and carve the blessed word as if it were some vile carcase given over to their butchery. When learned men handle the words of this book let them not forget whose book it is, and whose words they are that they are examining. There is a near approach to blasphemy against God himself in irreverence to his word. There is no book like this for authority and majesty ; it is hedged about with solemn sanctions, so that it hath both a wall of fire round about it and a glory in its midst to make it distinct from all other writings. All other books might be heaped together in one pile and burned, as the Mahometans burned the Alexandrian library with less loss to the world than would be occasioned by the total obliteration of a single page of the sacred volume. All other books are at the best but as gold leaf, whereof it takes acres to make an ounce of the precious metal ; but this book is solid gold ; it contains ingots, masses, mines, yea, whole worlds of priceless treasure, nor could its contents be exchanged for pearls, rubies, or the "terrible crystal" itself. Even in the mental wealth of the wisest men there are no jewels like the truths of revelation. Oh, sirs, the thoughts of men are vanity, the conceptions of men are low and grovelling at their best ; and he who has given us this book has said, "My thoughts are not your thoughts ; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Let it be to you and to me a settled matter that the word of the Lord shall be honoured in our minds and enshrined in our hearts. Let others speak as they may, "our soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto the Lord's judgments." We could sooner part with all that is sublime and beautiful, cheering or profitable, in human literature than lose a single syllable from the mouth of God.

But more : inasmuch as the Psalmist greatly revered God's word, *he intensely desired to know its contents*. He had not much of it, probably only the five books of Moses ; but the Pentateuch was enough to fill his whole soul with delight. Never depreciate, I pray you, the Old Testament. Remember that the great things that are said in the Psalms about the word of God were not spoken concerning the New Testament, which was not then written : although they may most fitly be applied by us to the entire series of inspired books, yet they were originally spoken only concerning the first five of them, so that the first part of the Bible, according to the Holy Spirit's own testimony, is to be valued beyond all price. Indeed, the substance of the New Testament is in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy,—there shut up like Noah in the ark, or hidden like Moses in his mother's house. The lovely form of queenly truth is there, only her veil conceals her countenance. The clearer shining of the New Testament is not a different light, nor perhaps is it in itself brighter ; but it shines through a thinner medium, and therefore more

fully enlightens us. If I might venture to compare one part of God's word with another, I have even thought that the first books are the deepest, and that if we had but skill to find it out we should discover within them a more condensed mass of revelation than even in the New Testament. I will not defend the opinion; but usually the lower strata, though most hidden, are the most dense, and certainly that which is most easy to be understood is not therefore of necessity the fullest of meaning, but the reverse. The various books of Scripture do not increase in real value, they only advance in their adaptation to us; the light is the same, but the lantern is clearer, and we see more. The treasure of the gospel is contained in the mines of the books of Moses, and I do not wonder therefore that David, instinctively knowing it to be there, but not being able to reach it, felt a great longing after it. He was not so well able to get at the truth as we are, since he had not the life of Christ to explain the types, nor apostolic explanations to open up the symbols of the law; therefore he sighed inwardly, and felt a killing heartbreak of desire to reach that which he knew was laid up in store for him. He saw the casket, but could not find the key. If he had not been sure that the treasure was there he would not have cried, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"; but he was like a voyager on the verge of a discovery, who nevertheless cannot quite reach it. He was like Columbus out at sea with the fruits of an unknown continent floating beneath his keel; but the wind did not favour his reaching the shore. He was like a miner whose pick has struck upon a lump of metal, and he is sure that gold is there; but he cannot get it away from the quartz in which it is embedded. The more certain he is that it is there, and the harder it is to reach, the more insatiable does his desire become to possess himself of the treasure. Hence I see the reasonableness of the Psalmist's vehement passion, and I marvel not that he cried, "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times."

But I am sure that David did not merely want to know as a matter of intellectual pleasure, but *he wished to feed upon God's word*; and what a very different thing that is, that feeding upon the word, from the bare knowledge of it. You can teach a child many chapters out of the Bible, and yet it may not have fed on a word of it. I have known persons to be so foolish as to set it as a task to a child to learn a portion of Scripture. I call this foolish, and surely it is also wicked to make the word of God into a punishment; as well turn the temple into a prison. Undoubtedly many know the history, the doctrine, and the letter of God's word as well as others know their Homer or their Virgil, and so far, so good; but oh, to feed upon the word of God is quite another thing. An oven full of bread is well enough, but for nourishment a loaf on the table is better, and a morsel in the mouth is better still; and if the mouthfuls are well digested and taken up into the system they are then best of all: in like manner truth in a sermon is to be valued; truth attentively heard comes nearer to practical benefit; truth believed is better still; and truth absorbed into the spiritual system is best of all. Alas, I fear we are not so absorbent as we ought to be. I like to see men who can be spiritual sponges to God's truth—suck it right up and take it into themselves: it would be well, however, that they should not

be so far like sponges as to part with the truth when the hands of the world attempt to wring it out of them. I say, we are not receptive enough, brethren, and that because our hearts are not in tune with God. Do we not feel at times that certain doctrines of the Word are hardly to our mind? We do not quite agree with the divine judgments on this or that; we dare not question their rightness, but we rather wish they were different. Friends, this must not be so any longer. All that kind of feeling must be gone; we must agree with God in all that he has spoken, and let our belief run side by side with the teaching of the Lord. It is high time that we were altogether agreed with God. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" We shall sit at the last great day as assessors with Christ in the great assize to judge the fallen spirits. Does it not become us to be of the same mind with our Lord? Should we not delight in his judgments even now that we may the more heartily say "Amen" to his verdict from the great white throne? Our judgment must be daily more and more conformed to the judgments of God, which are laid down in Scripture, and there must, at any rate, be in our spirit a longing after holiness until we delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate therein both day and night. We shall grow to the likeness of that which we feed upon; heavenly food will make us heavenly minded. The word received into the heart changes us into its own nature, and by rejoicing in the decisions of the Lord we learn to judge after his judgment and to delight ourselves in that which pleases him. This sense, I think, comes nearer to the explanation of David's intense longing.

Doubtless, David *longed to obey God's word*—he wished in everything to do the will of God without fault either of omission or of commission. He prays in another place, "Teach me thy law perfectly." Do you, my hearer, long after perfection in that same fashion? for all that truly know God must have a mighty yearning to run in the way of the Lord's commandments. He does not live before God who does not crave to live like God. There is no regeneration where there are no aspirations after holiness. The actual practice of obedience is necessary as a proof of the possession of true grace, for the rule is invariable, "By their fruits ye shall know them." No man knows the word of God till he obeys it: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine."

The Psalmist also *longed to feel the power of God's judgments in his own heart*. You know something about this, my friend, if the Spirit of God has had dealings with you. Have you not felt the Lord judging you in the chamber of your conscience? The Spirit comes by the word, and sets our iniquities before us, our secret sins in the light of his countenance. You had forgotten the wrong, or at least, you hardly remembered it as a sin; but suddenly you saw it all. As I have looked upon a landscape under a cloudy sky a gleam of sunlight has suddenly fallen upon one portion of it and made it stand out brilliantly from the midst of the surrounding gloom; so has the Holy Spirit poured a clear light upon some one act or set of acts of my life, and I have seen it as I never saw it before. That inner light has judged us, and led us to seek fresh cleansing: the judgments of God have come into our souls, and led us anew to cry for mercy. I have found it so, have not you? The

sins of our youth, and our former transgressions, have been judged of the Lord within us. I do not think that David fully recognized all the sins of his youth till he had become an old man, and, alas, many who have sinned in ways in which he never erred have failed to know the evil of their transgressions till in their bones and in their flesh they have felt its terrible effects years afterwards.

The Lord will judge his people and make sin bitter to them. Ought we to wish for this? I say, *Yes*. Every true man should feel a longing in his own soul to have every sin within him exposed, condemned, and executed. He should wish to hide nothing, but to be revealed unto himself and humbled by the sight. There are two judgments, one of which we must undergo, either judgment in the forum of the conscience, or else judgment before the great white throne at last. You must either condemn yourself or be condemned. A court of arraigns must be held in your heart, and you must be tried, and cast, and condemned in your own soul, or else you will not fully know the judgments of the Lord, or truly seek for pardon at his hands. God justifies the men who condemn themselves, and none but these shall ever obtain the righteousness which is of God by faith. Hence we may long for stripping judgments that we may obtain the robe of righteousness; we may cry to be emptied that grace may fill us. David desires that God's word would come right into him, and hold its court and judge and try him; and he came to feel this process to be so necessary and so salutary, that his soul broke with the longing which he had to be dealt with by God after this fashion. This is wisdom and prudence when a man so desires sanctification that he is straitened till painful processes are being carried on by which his purity is to be produced. It is a wise child that will, for the sake of health, even long to take the appointed medicine; God's children are not far from being well when they have reached such a point of sacred judgment.

This is the wish of all true believers,—*to be perfectly conformed to the judgments of God*. Some of us can honestly say that we would not have a second wish for ourselves if our heavenly Father would grant us this one,—that we might be perfect even as he is. We would leave all matters else with him as to wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honour or shame, life or death, if he would but give us complete conformity to his own will. This is the object of the craving, yearning, and sighing of our souls. We hunger to be holy. Here I must correct myself as to our one desire, for surely if the Lord would make us holy we should then desire that all other men would be the same. Oh that the world were converted to God! Oh that the truth of God would go forth like the brightness of the morning! Would God that every error and superstition might be chased away like bats and owls before the rising of the sun! O God, thy servants long for this. We ask for nothing save these two things: first reign, O Lord, in the triple kingdom of our nature, and then reign over all nature. Let the whole earth be filled with thy glory and our prayers are ended.

I hope that in this sense our soul breaketh for the longing which it hath towards God's judgments.

II. And now, secondly, let us think of THE SAINT'S ARDENT LONGINGS.

First, let me say of these longings, that *they constitute a living experience*, for dead things have no aspirations or cravings. You shall visit the graveyard, and exhume all the bodies you please, but you shall find neither desire nor craving. Longing lingers not within a lifeless corpse. Where the heart is breaking with desire there is life. This may comfort some of you: you have not attained as yet to the holiness you admire, but you long for it: ah, then, you are a living soul, the life of God is in you. You have not yet come to be conformed to the precept, but oh how you wish you were: that wish proves that a spark of the divine life is in your soul. The stronger that longing becomes the stronger is the life from which it springs: a feeble life hath feeble desires, but a vigorous life hath vehement desires, burning like coals of juniper. Are you earnestly longing this morning? Can you say that your heart pines for God as the watcher through the midnight sighs for the dawn, or as the traveller over burning sand longs for the shadow of a great rock? Oh, then, though I would not have you rest in longings—and, indeed, I know you never can—yet they are a proof that you are spiritually alive. Heart-longings are far better tests than attendance at sacraments, for men who are dead in sin have dared to come both to baptism and communion. Eager desires prove spiritual life much better than supposed attainments, for these supposed attainments may all be imaginary, but a heart breaking for the longing which it has to God's word is no fancy, it is a fact too painful to be denied.

Next, recollect the expression used in our text *represents a humble sense of imperfection*. David had not yet come to be completely conformed to God's judgments, nor yet to know them perfectly, or else he would not have said that he longed for them. So it is with us. We have not reached perfection, but do not let us, therefore, be discouraged, for the apostle of the Gentiles said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect;" and the man after God's own heart, even David, when he was at his best, and I think he was so when he was writing this blessed psalm, says not so much that he had obtained anything as that he longed after it, not so much that he had yet grasped it, but sighed for it: "my soul breaketh for the longing that it hath." I do not envy those who have no more longings, who have reached so divine a height that henceforth they can climb no higher. I heard of one who said his will was so perfectly resigned to the will of God that in fact he had no will, and so he had given up prayer, having nothing to seek. This is fine talk. When a man gets so full of life that he no longer breathes, I should say that he is dead. Prayer is the breath of the soul, and he that can do without it is dead in sin. When a man thinks himself so good that he cannot be better, he is probably so bad that he could not be worse. That is the judgment which caution will pronounce upon him; for all good men long to be better, and better men desire to be best of all, that they may dwell in heaven. The more grace the saints have the more they desire: sacred greed is begotten by the possession of the love of God: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments."

Furthermore, the expression of the text *indicates an advanced experience*. Augustine dwells upon this idea, for he rightly says, at first **_____** is an aversion in the heart to God's word, and desire after it

is a matter of growth. After aversion is removed there often comes an indifference in the heart; it is no longer opposed to godliness, but it does not care to possess it. Then, through divine grace, there springs up in the soul a sense of the beauty of God's word and will, and an admiration of holiness; this leads on to a measure of desire after the good thing, and a degree of appetite for it; but it shows a considerable growth in grace when we ardently long after it, and a still larger growth when the soul breaks because of these longings. It is a blessed thing when the soul is so stretched with desire that it is ready to snap, or when, like a vessel full of fermenting liquor, the working within threatens to break up the vessel altogether. The text represents the agonizing of an earnest soul. Such a state of things shows a considerable advancement in the divine life; but when a believer has those desires "at all times," then is he not far from being a full-grown Christian. "Oh," say you, "he thinks so little of what he has that he is crushed under the burden of desire for more." Yes, and he is the very man who has most of spiritual wealth. Those desires are mysterious entries in the account-book of his heart, and rightly read they prove his wealth, for in the divine life the more a man desireth the more he has already obtained. You may make tallies of your desires, and as you reckon by those tallies they shall tell you to a penny what your spiritual wealth is. The more full a man is of grace the more he hungers for grace. Strange it is to say so, but the paradox is true, the more he drinks, and the more he is satisfied and ceases to thirst in one sense, the more is he devoured with thirst after the living God. It is an advanced experience, then.

And it is an experience which I cannot quite describe to you, except by saying that it is a *bitter sweet*; or, rather, a sweet bitter, if the adjective is to be stronger than the noun. There is a bitterness about being crushed with desire; it is inevitable that there should be, but the aroma of this bitter herb is inexpressibly sweet, no perfume can excel it. After all, a bruised heart knows more peace and rest than a heart filled with the world's delights. How safe such a soul is. "Oh," said one, "I cannot go to hell, it is impossible, because I must love Jesus Christ and long after him. It is not possible for him to forbid me the privilege of loving him, and to love him and long for him is happiness." Better to feel a heavenly hunger than a worldly fulness. Heart-break for God is a sweeter thing than content in sinful pleasures. There is an inexpressible sweetness, a dawning of heaven, in longing after God; and yet because you feel you have not yet attained what you desire there is a bitter mixed with it. I think the only thing that honey wants to improve it is just a touch of bitter or acid in it. When you eat much honey it begins to cloy because it is all sweet, but just a taste of lemon or a dash of quassia might strengthen the taste, and enable it to take in a fresh freight of sweetness. It is surely so with true religious experience. Pangs of strong desire increase our overflowing pleasures, and longings and hungerings make attainings and enjoyings to be all the more delightful. May the Lord send us more of this lamb with bitter herbs, this mingled experience in which we are "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Still, those longings after God's word may become very wearing to a

man's soul. The sense of our text in the Hebrew is that of attrition or wearing down. Keble reads it—

“ My soul is worn and wasted quite
Thy laws desiring day and night.”

They wear out the man when they become so fervent as those confessed in the text. I believe that some of the Lord's holy ones have been worn down to sickness and depression by the passion of their hearts after God: their souls have become like sharp swords which cut through their scabbards, for they have destroyed the body by intense inner desires. At times holy men draw so near to God, and pine so greatly after his glory, that for half a word they would pass the frontier and enter into heaven. They are so fully in accord with God, that the shell which shuts in their soul is almost broken, and the newborn spirit is ready for its fullest life and liberty. How blessed to shake off the last fragment of that which holds us back from the freedom of an immortal life in perfect agreement with God. Oh to attain to this! One saint cried, “ Let me see the face of God,” and another answered, “ Thou canst not see God's face and live;” to which he replied “ Then let me see my God and die.” So do we feel that our soul comes near to dying with her longings after her God; little would we tremble even if we knew that the joy of realization would be killing, and would pass us over the border into Immanuel's land, where we shall see the King in his beauty.

But I must not linger, though there is much to tempt me to speak on. Are you searching yourselves, brethren, to see whether you have such longings? If so, do you have them “ at all times”? We are not to long for God's word and will by fits and starts; we are not to have desires awakened by novelty or by excitement; nor are we to long for divine things because for awhile temporal things fail us, and we are sick and sorry, and weary of the world, and so in disgust turn to God. Brethren, I trust you long after God when all is bright in providence, and that you love his word when all is pleasant in family affairs. It is well to desire the Lord's will when he is permitting you to have your own will as well as when he is thwarting you. God is to be always our delight. He is our defence in war, but he is also our joy in peace. Do not use him as sailors use those harbours of refuge for which they are not bound, into which they only run in time of storm, but if it be fair they stand far out to sea. The Lord's will is to be the path of our feet, and himself the element of our life. This is to be a true child of God, *always* to have a yearning soul towards God's commandments; to be *eager* after his word “ at all times.” May the Holy Spirit keep us ever *hungering* and *thirsting* after God and his truth.

III. And now I am going to close with a few cheering reflections. Methinks this morning some heart has been saying, “ There are comforting thoughts for me in all this. I am a poor thing, I have not grown much, I have not done much, I wish I had; but I have strong longings, I am very dissatisfied, and I am almost ready to die with desire after Christ.” My dear soul, listen—let this encourage you. First, *that is at work in your soul.* Never did a longing after God's judgments grow up in the soul of itself. Weeds come up of themselves,

but the rarer kind of plants I warrant you will never be found where there has been no sowing: and this flower, called love-lies-bleeding, this plant of intense eagerness after God, never sprang up in the human breast of itself. God alone has placed it there. Friend, there was a time when you had no such longing. Ah, and if you were left to yourself, you would never have such longing again: you would decline till you became as content with the world as others are; you know you would. Come, then, beloved, God is at work in your soul—let this comfort you. The great Potter has you yet upon the wheel—he has not cast you away as worthless: his work may pain you, but it is honourable and glorious. Your heart may swell with unutterable longings, and it may be torn by throes of desire, but life thus proves its presence, and reaches forth to something yet beyond. These pains of desire are the Lord's doings, and they should be perceived with gratitude.

The result of God's work is very precious. Come, though it be only a gracious desire, thank God for it. Though thou canst get no further than holy longing, be grateful for that longing. I would have thee strive for the highest gifts, but I would not have thee despise what God hath already given thee. I have known times when I thought myself in a very strange case, and I judged ill of myself, and yet a month or two afterwards I have looked back upon that condition which I condemned, and I have wished that I could return to it. Has it not been so with you? You have been racked with sighs, groans, cravings, and other forms of unrest, and you have said, "O God, deliver me from this sore travail"; but when within a week you have had to lament insensibility and lukewarmness, you have cried, "Lord, put me back again into my state of desire! Lord, set me hungering and thirsting again, a fierce appetite is better than this deadness." Oh, you that are longing, be thankful that you do long, for you have a rich promise to cheer you, since it is written, "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him." The more wretched and unhappy you are under a sense of sin the more grateful you ought to be for tenderness of heart; and the more you are longing to lay hold on Christ and to become like Christ, the more you should thank God that he hath wrought this selfsame thing in you. How sweet is that word, "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear."

Hearken once again: not only is the desire precious, but *it is leading on to something more precious.* Hear ye that which is written: "The desire of the righteous shall be granted." What sayest thou to such words as these? "He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Do you think that God prompts us to desire a thing which he does not mean to bestow upon us? Is that the way you treat your children? I know you will play with the little ones sometimes, and hold a nut or a penny in your closed hand and bid them open your fingers for themselves; but you give them their treat before long. You would not hold a sweetmeat before a poor child and promise it to him, and excite his desires

for it, and then refuse him a taste of it: that were a cruel pastime. God is not unkind: if he makes you hunger, for that hunger he has made ready the bread of heaven; if he makes you thirst, for that thirst he has already filled the river of the water of life. If the desire comes from God the supply of that desire will as certainly come from God. Rest you sure of that, and cry mightily to him with strong faith in his goodness.

Meanwhile, *the desire itself is doing you good*. It is driving you out of yourself, it is making you feel what a poor creature you are, for you can dig no well in your own nature, and find no supplies within your own spirit. It is compelling you to look alone to God. Do not need much compelling. Come readily to your Lord. Be one of those vessels which can sail with a capful of wind. Come by faith to Jesus, even though you fear that your desires are by no means so vivid and intense as those of my text. Believe, and you shall be established. Rest assured of this, that there is in God whatever your soul wants. In Christ Jesus dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and in that divine fulness there must of necessity be more than a creature can require. In Christ Jesus there is exactly what your soul is panting for. Yes, I mean you, weakest of the flock; you, feeblest of the saints; you who dare not put your names down among God's people at all,—if there is a sacred longing in your spirit, there is that in Christ which is adapted to you, despite your feebleness and unworthiness. God is ready to give you whatever you are ready to receive. Only come and trust him for it, and look to his dear Son, for in Jesus you have all things.

Oh, this is the blessedness of this longing after God's judgments, that *it makes Christ precious*; and, with that remark, I have done. We see all God's word in Christ; we see all God's decisions against sin and for righteousness embodied in our Saviour; we see that if we can get Christ we have then found the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and, in fact, the all-sufficiency of God. If we can become like Christ we shall be like unto God himself. This, I say, makes Christ so precious, and makes us long to get more fully to know him and to call him ours. Come, ye longing ones, come to my Lord Jesus even now! Come, ye that are bursting with wishes and desires, come and trust the Saviour, and rest in him now; and may this be the hour in which you shall find how true it is, "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." May you yet sing the Virgin's song, "He hath filled the hungry with good things. My soul doth magnify the Lord."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxix. 17—24,
81—88.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 119 (Song I.),
119 (Song VI.)

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS AT A STAND.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Jesus stood still.”—Mark x. 49.

A FRIEND enquired of me yesterday, “Will you preach on Sunday morning to saints or to sinners?” I could not at the moment answer him; but I afterwards thought within myself—If I preach concerning Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, I shall kill two birds with one stone, and give both saints and sinners a profitable theme for thought. There is but one message of the gospel, and it has a voice to all. Saints know no sweeter music than the name of Jesus, and sinners know no richer comfort than his person and his work. We preach to all when we preach him who is all in all. Christ comes as life to the dead, and he is equally life to the living. I trust there will at this time be a word in season, both to those who fear God and to those who fear him not, while I speak of the Saviour from these three words, “Jesus stood still.”

Our divine Lord has changed his position, but he is himself the same as ever, and therefore every truth which we learn concerning him in the past becomes all the more valuable since it is still true of him. Our Lord's name is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” What his character was on earth such it is still; his pursuits on earth are his pursuits still; his main object when he was here is his chief aim even in the glory. We have not to say, “This is what Jesus was,” and then to mourn that he has changed; for he is without variability. His transit from the tree to the throne has not affected his nature so as to make him other than he was when here below. If we delight in a trait of his character as drawn in the gospels, we may be sure that he possesses the same excellence now that he is at the right hand of the Father. His dealing with blind Bartimæus nineteen centuries ago is a fair type of his conduct towards every poor blind sinner who at this hour comes to him crying, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” I hope we shall see the miracle of Jericho repeated in this house this very day. I am persuaded that it will be so; for even now, constrained by the prayers already offered, Jesus waits to be

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stations; and to-day it shall be said that at the entreaties of his pe-
 Jesus paused to work wonders of love—"Jesus stood still."

I. First, let us answer this question,—WHAT MEANS THIS PAUSE
 THE SAVIOUR'S PROGRESS, "Jesus stood still"? This was not
 a momentary pause; for he was ever on the move: "He went about d
 good." He might have done much among men if he had taken up
 station and remained in one place, so that the crowds could h
 resorted to him to listen to his voice, or to be healed by his power;
 Jesus was not an immovable statue of benevolence, he was active
 engaged, an itinerant preacher who never wearied in his circuit.
 does not often see Jesus standing still. His was the love which does
 wait to be sought after by men; for it has come to seek as well a
 side that which was lost. The zeal of the Lord's house consumed h
 so that for him there was no loitering or standing still. Yet in
 case before us the Great Worker ceased from his activity: "Jesus st

In the gospel we read that our Lord was going up to Jerusalem, w
 he had solemnly set to accomplish his great work. His own we
 verse: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall
 delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they sh
 condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: and t
 shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, ;
 shall spit upon him; and the third day he shall rise again." (Mark x. 33, &
 He had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened unti
 was accomplished; therefore with brave resolve he forced his way
 through. If any pause to him would have been untimely unless th
 had been some worthy reason to arrest him. His great work pres
 upon his soul and he longed to be fully engaged in it, as one who
 sought to drink and thirsted to set it to his lips. Yet, though
 thoughts were thus urgently preoccupied, and his whole heart
 pressed on and him pausing in his steady progress to the desi
 end: "Jesus stood still." There was, doubtless, somewhat spec
 about it's momentary pause. What was it which fastened him to t
 spot? It was not hesitancy—his resolve was too firm; it was n
 doubt—the thought of drawing back never passed the Redeemer's mi
 onward, was his fixed resolve. He stood still from no t
 worldly motive; all his movements and his pauses have a nobility abo
 even and a richness of meaning which no personal motive can accou
 nt for.

Our Lord was beginning at the moment that triumphal process
 which commenced and he reached the temple amid the hosannas of t
 we know. It is true he was advancing to the cross; but ere
 reached his death he was to be proclaimed as the King, meek and low
 who were riding upon a colt the foal of an ass. His triumphal mar
 he began, and Jesus is in the midst of admiring listeners. Yet Jes
 march with the whole procession halted; the twelve disciples and t
 company of the faithful are arrested, and the crowd carries in t
 way up of Jericho. For what great reason did it happen that Jes
 stood still? I could have wished that a master sculptor had been the
 and could then have caught a glimpse of the standing Jesus. I think
 suddenly arrested; he moves not an inch, but waits in listeni

attitude. His eye is fixed in the direction whence had come a certain pleading cry. His ears are evidently open to hear the movement which follows his command to call the suppliant. The Saviour's thoughts are passing too: he stands still mentally as well as physically, engrossed by one object to which he will attend before he takes another step. Ceasing from his discourse, however much his hearers regret his silence, he gives ear, and eye, and tongue to the petitioner whose voice reached him above the tramping and hubbub of the crowd. *That cry came from a blind beggar—that was the man.* Yes, the blind beggar of Jericho had stopped the prophet of Nazareth: tell out his name—blind Bartimæus, the son of Timæus, has stayed the Saviour, and holds him spellbound. Jesus waits in perfect readiness to attend to the pleading one, and grant him his desire. The cry of "Son of David, have mercy upon me" has caught his ear, and the music of the word "mercy" holds him. As the Song hath it, "The King is held in the galleries." Attentive and prepared to help with all his mighty power, Jesus waits. He carries at a blind beggar's prayer, resolved to do his bidding. I have seen servants wait upon their masters, but here is the Lord of all waiting upon one lower than a servant, waiting upon a blind man whose trade was beggary.

"Jesus stood still": he was all there: ready, willing, able, too, to do for the poor man whatsoever he needed. He asked him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" as if he stood at his beck and call, and could not take a step onward until he had answered the prayer.

"Jesus stood still." I have heard of Joshua who said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon"; but I rank the blind beggar above Joshua, for he causes the Sun of righteousness to stand still. Yes, he who created both sun and moon stood still, and the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man. Jericho had produced in ages long gone by a prodigy of faith among her harlots, and now she shows us a wonder of grace among her beggars. How marvellous was the power which dwelt in that poor man's cry! Is such power to be found among men at this hour? Ah, there is the point. The Saviour is the same to-day as ever, and I believe, my brethren, that you and I have power at this time to make him stand still if we act as Bartimæus did. Many a poor sinner here this morning, if God shall help him to cry after the style of the blind man, can command the Saviour's full attention, can command his power, and get from him the grace which he is so willing and able to bestow. As for you who know and love him, be ye well assured that no blind beggar can have such power with him as you have who are his friends. I am sure that the voices of those who have laid their heads in his bosom must have great power over him, and if our brethren will but use their influence with the Well-beloved they may ask what they will, and it shall be done unto them. Pleading saints can cause him to stand still even now. I have feared and trembled for my country of late lest the Lord Jesus should depart from it and take away the candlestick out of its place. More than two hundred years ago George Herbert said, when he looked upon the declining state of godliness in England—

"Religion stands a-tiptoe in our land,
Ready to pass to the American strand."

He saw the Puritans flying away to the New England colonies, and he trembled for the ark of God in his own land; but, thank God, the prayers of Herbert and the prayers of other saints have constrained the Lord Jesus to abide with us, though "he made as though he would have gone further." Brethren, the Lord had thought, as it were, to cross the Atlantic, and fix his dwelling among a people who should be gathered in a newly-discovered land. Thank God, he has built a church in America; but he has not left us without witness. Because of the tears of his saints, "Jesus stood still." Still, we hold him, and we will not let him go; he abides among our churches, still opening blind eyes, saving souls, and making men whole. O ye that love him, take care that by your entreaties you still detain him.

At times our Lord, as judge among the nations, arises to visit the sins of a people upon them. Patience makes room for justice, and Providence determines that guilty nations shall be scourged: at such times they are blessed indeed who can cause the King to stand still. This wicked country of ours has often escaped through the prayers of the saints. No man can read our history without perceiving that among guilty nations we hold a sorrowful place; for we have had more light than any other people, and have sinned against it full often. This erring nation had been scourged to destruction if it had not been that the intercessions of God's people have caused the Judge of all the earth to stand still. Jesus now rules all nations as Lord of Providence, and metes out justice and judgment among them, but a plea for mercy brings a decree of forbearance, and sinful nations are permitted still to stand within the bounds of grace.

I doubt not that when the end of a reprobate has almost come, and when a sinner's breath has almost left his body, and the judgment has been about to be executed upon his guilty soul, the prayers of earnest men and women have made the merciful One linger yet a little longer, and give a further space in which repentance might spring up in the long-hardened heart, and the faith-glance might yet be given by the long-blinded eye. What pauses grace has made when faith has interceded!

Whatever our Lord Jesus is doing he is never so occupied as to disregard earnest prayer. He would, if needful, put everything aside to listen to importunate and earnest pleading. To this day Jesus standeth still to hear the cry of the destitute. If at this moment we could withdraw the curtains of heaven we should see our Saviour waiting to be gracious, ready to hear our prayers, hearkening to every sigh, putting every tear into his bottle, answering every petition which comes up before him from a sincere heart. What though he ruleth empires, he stands still to hear the wailing of distress; what though he inhabiteth the praises of Israel, he is moved by the sorrows of sinners; what though he hasteneth the day of his coming, and is ready to begin his triumphal advent to the New Jerusalem, yet will he pause when the poor and needy present their case before him.

Thus have I tried to picture the Lord Jesus as standing still. How I wish that some awakened one would now behold the Saviour, and exclaim, with Mr. Wesley,—

“ Stopp'd by a sinner's prayer,
 Thou canst no farther move,
 Thou canst no more forbear
 To manifest thy love.
 Thou waitest now to show thy grace,
 And callest *me* to seek thy face.”

II. We will now enter upon a practical enquiry: WHO AND WHAT WAS THIS WHICH ARRESTED THE SAVIOUR? What made him stand still? Herod could not have done it, nor Pilate, nor chief priests, nor scribes, nor the foresight of the bloody sweat, nor a vision of the cross. These would but have quickened his steps to enter upon the conflict, and achieve redemption. What made him stand still?

First, as I have already said, it was a *blind beggar*. I am afraid there are very few here this morning who are literally beggars; for nowadays we wear good clothes, and are so very respectable, that abjectly poor people do not like to come and sit with us. The more's the pity. Yet I know that many poor persons are here now, and I thank God that it is so. Those who are in the depths of poverty will, I hope, believe that they are welcome to the house of the Lord, who is no respecter of persons. We are right glad to see the poor among us, the more the merrier. Bartimæus was a man of the very lowest order; he did not earn his own bread; he could not; he sat publicly by the wayside, and held out his hand for alms. Men give small honour to a blind beggar, and are apt to pass him by without regard; but he to whom we owe all hope of heaven stood still at the cry of such as he. After this no one among you will dare to say, “I cannot be saved because I am so obscure, so poor, so homeless, so helpless.” Tell me what you are at your very worst, and still I have good tidings concerning my Lord's condescending favour to the like of you. Did you lodge in the casual ward last night? Yet are you welcome to Christ. Have you come from the workhouse? Yet are you invited to the palace of grace. Do you labour very hard for very little, and can you barely pay your way? The Lord Jesus Christ wants no fee or reward from you; come empty-handed to his treasury. Jesus does not look at garments. What cares Christ about our coats? Tailors think of such matters, but Jesus does not. Christ sees the man himself and not his raiment: he looks not at the man's possessions, but at his heart. In mercy he beholds not the excellence of the man, but his wants, his sorrows, and his poverty. No man here shall ever be able to say, “It was of no use for me to think about religion: my circumstances were too low.” “I was depressed,” says one, “I should have thought about better things, but really the grind of poverty was so dreadful that I could not rise from the dust.” This is not true, for you are not poorer than the blind beggar of Jericho, and the sharp tooth of penury has not bitten you more severely than many of the Lord's suffering saints. Misery had eaten into the heart of this poor blind man, and yet his cry made the Saviour stand still. Now then, you that are the lowest, poorest, most afflicted, most despised in this house, I pray that you may be helped to appeal to Jesus for mercy, and he will stand still to listen to you, even to you.

But what was the art by which Bartimæus stayed the Lord? That

which stopped the Saviour was a *blind beggar's cry*. The man did not sing a touching hymn to a melting tune, he only cried. Sometimes persons have such melodious voices that if they sing in the street you linger to hear them, and are in no hurry to go on with your errand; but this man did not sing; he had not even learned to intone his prayers as certain do in these odd times. I wonder whether the Lord ever listens to prayers when men turn them into sing-song and deliver them in an unnatural voice,—*intoning* they call it. Why do men think it an improvement to say their prayers the wrong way upwards? This man *cried*. It was a cry, a ringing cry, which increased in strength each time it was uttered. Thus it uprose into the ear, "Son of David, have mercy on me! Son of David, have mercy on me!" The voice came from a heart burdened with misery, breaking with desire, weary of long years of darkness, pining for the light, and hopeful of obtaining it. "Son of David, have mercy on me," again the cry rose above all the hubbub of the throng.

The prayer was a *cry for mercy*: "Son of David, have mercy." If you ask our Lord for anything on the ground of merit, you will find him deaf as a stone: if you think yourself a very good body, deserving favour at his hands, he will pass on and never regard you, for he has not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Change that plea for a better, for when your prayer is for mercy you will touch the Saviour's heart directly, and mercy shall be yours. The proud man prays, and he thinks his eloquent prayer must prevail, but the winds carry away his supplications; the humble man does no more than smite on his breast and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and that *cry for mercy* wins the day. When the messenger of mercy was travelling through the world he asked himself at what inn he should alight and spend the night. Lions and Eagles were not to his mind, and he passed by houses wearing such warlike names; so, too, he passed by places known by the sign of "The Waving Plume" and "The Conquering Hero," for he knew that there was no room for him in these inns. He hastened by many a hostelry and tarried not, till at last he came to a little inn which bore the sign of "The Broken Heart." "Here," said mercy's messenger, "I would fain tarry, for I know by experience that I shall be welcome here." "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Now, beloved friends, if you plead for mercy because deeply conscious that nothing but the grace of God can save you, even though you cannot put pretty words together or offer a long prayer, you shall prevail with God. You need not be an orator in order to be mighty in pleading with the Lord. Only appeal on the ground of free grace and dying love and Jesus will stand still and listen to you.

There was another point about this cry which must not be forgotten: *the name of Jesus was used as a plea*. Is there anything in heaven, or out of heaven, more powerful than the name of Jesus? "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you": "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name that will I do." Father and Son stand pledged to recognise and accept every draft upon the exchequer of heaven which is endorsed with the name of Jesus, a name that makes angels rejoice and devils tremble: there is none like it anywhere. The blind beggar of Jericho had learned to use the name

of Jesus: and he called him "Son of David,"—Prince, Messiah, the sent One of God, the Saviour of the world. Herein is wisdom. O dear hearer, if you know the name of Jesus plead it; if you know what he is, what he came to do, what he has done, what he is doing; if you know anything about his character, his nature, his power, or his promise, plead it before him in prayer. In humble faith say to him, "Son of David, if thou be indeed all this, be all this to me, I beseech thee; if thou art a Saviour, save me; if thou blottest out sin, blot out mine; if thou dost open the understanding, open thou mine, for thy great mercy sake." When we can thus reason together with the Lord we shall have good speed in his presence, and again it shall be said, "Jesus stood still."

I suppose the main thing which brought our gracious Master to a stand was the fact that he had now an opportunity for doing good. Jesus has come to seek his lost sheep, and when his eyes light upon one all torn and lame he stops to deal tenderly with it. Our Lord was an itinerant Saviour, and wherever he found that he was wanted there he staid. The object of his mission is still the same:—

"He comes, from thickest films of vice,
To clear the mental ray;
And on the eye-balls of the blind
To pour celestial day.

"He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure;
And, with the treasures of his grace,
To enrich the humble poor."

Certain people in his day boasted that they could see: our Lord did not tarry to argue with them; they did not want him, and he therefore passed them by; but here is a blind man, and was it not said of the Messiah that he should open the eyes of the blind? Here is the opportunity for him, and before that opportunity he stands still until his illuminating work shall be done. You good people who imagine that you will go to heaven by your own works, my Lord does not wait on you; but you poor sinners who have no merits, you guilty ones who need his mercy, Jesus stops for you. You who have so much strength that you can believe when you like, can repent when you like, can be saved when you like, can be quite independent of the Holy Spirit and the sovereign grace of God, Jesus does not look at you; but oh, you that are blind and cannot see, you that wish you could see, you who groan because you have no strength, you are the men for my Master. Believe me, the Lord of mercy looks not at merit, but at misery. The necessity of the case is its claim upon his tender heart. O sons of men, the Infinite Saviour cares not for your fulness; his eye of pity rests upon your emptiness. He turns indignantly from fancied claims of proud, self-righteous men, but he hastens to relieve those who confess their faults, and seek his face. This is the work and office of Jesus, and he loves to exercise his high calling: come to him, and put your case into his hand. Be this your prayer—

"Since still thou goest about to do
Thy needy creatures good;
On me, that I thy praise may show,
Be all thy wonders show'd.

“ If thou, my God, art passing by,
 Oh let me find thee near !
 Jesus, in mercy hear my cry,
 Thou, Son of David, hear !

“ Behold me waiting, in the way,
 For thee, the heavenly light ;
 Command me to be brought, and say,
 ‘ Sinner, receive thy sight.’ ”

Thus I have tried to show what was the power which rivetted the Saviour to the spot so that the gospel saith, “ Jesus stood still.”

Under our third head we shall now enquire—

III. WHAT WAS THERE SPECIAL ABOUT THIS BLIND MAN AND HIS PRAYER ? An answer lies on the surface,—there was this special about it, first, that *the man was full of need*. He had two loads to carry. He was poor,—that is bad enough ; but he was also blind,—that is worse. Here was a man with double need, without bread and without light ; and therefore his cries had a double loudness in the ears of the sinner’s friend. I cannot so look around these galleries and over this area as to spy out those in direst need, or I would look their way and say,

“ Come, ye sinners, poor and wretched ; ”

but I can make a few enquiries, and may the Lord find out his own by them. Is there anyone here who has a double need, who is doubly guilty, doubly helpless—a man who feels that, if Jesus does not save him, he will be doubly damned ? Do I speak to one whose need is doubly pressing, so that his heart breaks for immediate relief ? Ah, thou doubly lost one, Jesus will stand still for thee. You who are blind and poverty-stricken, too, shall have speedy audience. You that have nothing, and can see no hope of ever having anything, you are the favoured ones whose pleading voices Jesus never disregards. Cry mightily to him at once. He waits at this moment. “ Why,” says one, “ you are preaching up our poverty, our beggary, our bankruptcy.” Exactly so.

“ ‘Tis perfect poverty alone
 That sets the soul at large ;
 While we can call one mite our own
 We get no full discharge.

“ But let our debts be what they may,
 However great or small,
 As soon as we have nought to pay,
 Our Lord forgives us all.”

But there was another speciality about this man besides his double need, and that was *his strong desire*. When he sought for sight he meant it, and there was no question about his sincerity and eagerness. His was no prayer which froze on the lips. His desire was, moreover, a very fitting and appropriate one. He sighed not for a luxury, but for a necessity. Our Lord said in the thirty-sixth verse to James and John, “ What would ye that I should do for you ? ” and now, when he speaks to Bartimæus, he uses the same words—“ What wilt thou that I should do unto thee ? ” James and John asked what was not fitting, or needful, or proper ; but this poor man had a desire which was, of all

others, the most natural and suitable. What should a blind man seek but sight? Have you, dear hearer, a longing for salvation? What else should a sinner long for? Do you desire forgiveness of sin? It is of all things most fitting that a guilty one should desire pardon. Do you wish for an opened spiritual eye? Do you pray to be made whole? Do you pine to become holy? Oh, then, if your desire be real and fervent its object is so suitable, so commendable, that you may be sure of its being granted: therefore, be of good cheer, and at this moment hope in the Lord.

Another thing that was special about the case was *the man's earnest pleading*, for his desire turned itself into prayer, and that prayer took up arguments and urged them earnestly. His prayer was so full of life that it could not be repressed. Many tried to silence his cry, but it could not be hushed. Important persons said to the man, "Be quiet." Apostles charged him to hold his tongue; but he heeded no one. I am sure that if an apostle were to say to some of you, "Do not pray," you would feel quite warranted in ceasing from praying; at least, it would serve as a good enough excuse for you. You would say, "I never mean to seek mercy any more, for Peter told me not to do so." Oh, but if in your heart there is a work of grace, fifty Peters could not stop your praying. Irrepressible prayer brings assured answers. If there is a prayer in your soul that James and John could not silence, if there is a cry in your soul that Andrew and Bartholomew and Nathanael and the whole eleven of them could not suffocate, the Lord Jesus will speedily hear you. Pray, my brethren, pray without ceasing, though all the devils in hell should charge you not to pray. Though all the saints in heaven should vote your pleading useless, yet still plead on, and your suit shall speed with the Redeemer. He stops for you, and even now it may be said of him, "Jesus stood still."

That, after all, which fastest bound the Saviour was *the man's faith*, for he said to him, "Thy faith hath made thee whole." What kind of faith was it? It was the best faith as to origin, for it was the faith of a blind man, and therefore was not adulterated by the confidence which comes of sight. Faith cometh not by seeing, or else it never could have come to this poor beggar; it cometh by hearing, and he could hear. We have among us a certain sort of people who seem to imagine that faith comes by sight. Acting upon this, they work upon the eye in many ways. If you step inside the walls of their churches you see an enormous cross; the altar is sumptuously adorned, mystical letters and characters are here and there in abundance. Open your eyes and get a blessing, if there be one. See, here comes a man who on his back and all around him carries means of grace for the eye. He wears an embroidered cross, and all over he is rigged out and ragged out, so as to instruct and save all who are willing to study symbolical vestures. He that hath eyes to see let him see. Watch what this successor of the apostles is doing; observe his genuflections, his facings about, his noddings of the head,—all these minister grace to the beholders. Faith of the High Anglican kind would seem to come by sight; but the faith of God's elect, the faith which saves the soul, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Bartimseus had seen nothing, but he had believed the report concerning

the Messiah, and had received the benediction, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." If Jesus Christ raised the dead, this man did not see the miracle; if Jesus healed the leper, this man did not see the wonder; and if the lame man leaped like a hart, this man had neither seen his crutches nor his leaping: his faith was solely born of hearing, and this is faith's best pedigree. Dear friends, be attentive hearers of the gospel. Thank God that you are privileged to be hearers. You need not sigh for ceremonials or architecture or processions. If you are a hearer of the gospel you have sufficient means of grace. By Bargarate King Jesus rides into the town of Mansoul. He saith, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live." What! though no dream, or vision, or rapturous experience be as a sign for your eye to see, believe in Jesus and you shall find in him more than all signs and wonders.

IV. Thus have we thought over the peculiar forces which made the Saviour stand; may we know how to use them. Does anyone enquire, What has this to do with us? This is my last point: "WHAT IS THERE SPECIAL FOR YOU, MY HEARER?" I think there may be much for you, for it contains much for me. I was a blind beggar once, as blind as the heathens' gods, of which we read, "eyes have they, but they see not;" and I was a beggar too, so penniless as not to possess a pennyworth of merits to bless myself with. I thought I had some good works once, quite a little cupboard full, but they bred worms and stank, and I had to sweep them all out and sweeten the place which they had defiled. I found myself worse than having nothing, for, like the Egyptians when the plague of frogs was removed, I had heaps of rubbish to get rid of. My former good works became, in my judgment, like forged bank notes or counterfeit money: I was afraid of being charged with the attempt to utter them. Alas, my base good works, my proud good works, my deceitful good works pressed heavily on my conscience. By putting these into the place of Christ I had made them worse than my sins. I was in a worse state than a man who owns nothing, for I was over head and ears in debt, and I knew it. Then it was that I heard of one who would deliver me, and I cried to him, and he delivered me speedily. Oh, how I wish that many others would feel that they too need the divine Saviour. O that men knew that they are poor, and blind, and that Jesus can give them eyes, and can supply all their wants.

It is a very curious thing—a very curious thing to me—that so much uncertainty hangs over this narrative. I am not so sure as to speak positively, but I believe that this story which Mark tells us is not the whole of what happened, for Matthew is certain that there were two blind men. Hear what Matthew says about it. Surely it is the same incident, or one strangely similar. Matthew xx. 29. "And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto him, Lord,

that our eyes may be opened." There were two blind beggars, though Mark only sees it needful to mention the principal one. If there were two, one of them is not known by name at all. We know the name of Bartimæus, and we know the name of his father, but we do not know the name of his companion. Mark might have left out the father's name, which is implied in the name of Bartimæus, and he might have mentioned the other beggar, but he was not moved so to do, perhaps for the very reason that we should learn more out of his silence than out of the information. I venerate the silence of the Bible as much as its speech. I have been wondering if there be a man or woman here who will be saved this morning of whom we shall never hear, whose name will never be on our books, and whose story will never cheer our heart. It appears from what Matthew says that this No. 2, whoever he was, this anonymous body, prayed in the same words as Bartimæus. Bartimæus was a man of force and energy, and he made the prayer as to its words, "Son of David, have mercy on me"; the other man followed suit, and adopted the methods of Bartimæus. He was like the poor orator who had to speak after Burke, and very wisely said no more than "I say ditto to Mr. Burke." Mark does not take much notice of him, because he was the echo of Bartimæus, and probably a poor feeble-minded shiftless body, whose only chance seemed to be in following the lead of a stronger mind. Here, then, is the mercy of it, that though we do not know the man's name he had his eyes opened quite as surely as Bartimæus, and though he could not make a prayer of his own, and only followed Bartimæus, he had sight of his own, and a word of comfort for himself from Jesus. Oh, poor dear hearts, you right away in the background there, you that never will have the courage to join the church because you are so timid, be of good courage, for Jesus observes even you. Oh, you poor tremblers, who have not wit enough to put a dozen words together—at least you think so, for there is no telling what may be hidden away in you somewhere—remember that it is the inward desire that Jesus hears, and not the pleasing sentences of ready speakers. If you can only pray as somebody else prayed I would have you borrow your prayers from the Bible, for Scriptural prayers are sure to be right. Take the prayer of the publican if you cannot make one of your own, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

As soon as I saw that there were two beggars whose eyes were opened I thought, "After preaching I will look to meet with a convert whose name and family I shall know, and with his tale of grace I will solace myself; but oh that my Lord would bless some whom I shall never know, some anonymous ones, some nobodies, some weak and shrinking souls. Are there any such here? Will not many such read the sermon? O that at their cry Jesus may stand still to bless them.

I must mention a more curious thing still. I am not certain, I am not clear, I am talking about things which must remain undecided—but it is very possible that there were *three* blind beggars healed. It may be that first of all one man, Bartimæus, applied to the Lord Jesus and had his eyes opened when Jesus was nearly out of Jericho; and then two others had their eyes opened when Jesus and the crowds were actually going out of the town. Many writers think that Matthew and

Mark record two different incidents, and it is very likely to be so. Probably the two blind men, having heard of the success of Bartimæus, were encouraged to try for themselves, and carefully imitated his model, crying in the same language for the same boon. Thus there was a repetition of the incident on a doubled scale. I like that notion. I wonder whether No. 3 is here, whose name we do not know, and probably never shall know, but yet he is known to Jesus and his cry is heard. He has come here with poor No. 2, who is equally weak and trembling with himself: God bless them both.

Those of us on whom the Saviour has wrought a good work would speak well of him for the encouragement of the fearing ones. I bear my witness to the eye-opening power of the gospel. "One thing I know, whereas I was blind; now I see," and no one opened my eyes but Jesus. I went to him just as I was, I trusted him and he saved me. May there not be two more blind men or women sitting somewhere about who will follow our example? Just do as we have done, pray and trust, cry and believe. Say, "Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on me!" Remember he that hath saved one can save two; he that hath saved two can save three; ay, it stops not at three; if there were three thousand here, who all cried for mercy, they should all have it, and as many millions more as could be found to follow in the same track.

I see this morning before my mind's eye Jesus standing before Jericho like a second Joshua. As you all know, the names Jesus and Joshua are the same. Joshua crossed the Jordan, and he stood with his sword drawn to capture Jericho, and commence his march through Canaan, conquering and to conquer. See, here is Jesus, and he must needs make captives in Jericho before he advances further into the land. The city of palm-trees must yield him followers before the palms of victory are cast at his feet. He enters into Jericho, not to lay its walls flat to the ground, nor to slay its inhabitants, but to open eyes that have long been closed, and bless poor creatures who have pined in penury. This is the first fruit of his warfare, the commencement of a career which shall end at Jerusalem, where he shall smite the Prince of Darkness, and win the victory for all mankind. Even now I may say of Jesus Christ which was said of the son of Nun—"So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was noised abroad throughout all the country." I wish the Lord Jesus Christ this morning would make this place as the gate of Jericho, and begin on this spot a great revival of religion throughout the whole land, by opening the eyes of some that are blind. Let the prayer go up from many a heart, "Lord, open my eyes," and he will do it; and let that request be followed by another, "Lord, save millions," and he will hear us. Let us pray boldly and believingly in the name of Jesus. Hear thou us, O Lord. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark x. 32—52.

VS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—68 (Song I.), 598, 611.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BELIEVER'S DEATHDAY BETTER THAN HIS BIRTHDAY.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 3RD, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."—Ecclesiastes vii. 1.

In this part of the world we can hardly understand how much the Easterns thought of perfumes. When Solomon speaks of "precious ointment" he speaks of a luxury highly appreciated by those who heard him. Orientals delighted to anoint themselves with fragrant oil, and to pour upon their heads unguents full of perfume. We do not so—at any rate, not to the same lavish extent; but among the luxuries of eastern life was that of delighting the nostril with sweet smells. The figure is easy to understand as it is here used to set forth the excellence of a good name. A man who is perfumed, and who has put upon his head precious ointment, is sweet and pleasant to himself. It gives him joy, and so does a good name afford pleasure to its possessor. Besides that, the perfumed person was agreeable to other people—those who were round about him were refreshed by the fragrance: and so a noble character is agreeable to all who come near it. In some cases the use of a sacred ointment, or anointing oil, signified that the man was himself pleasant even to God: the priests went not into the holy place except they had been anointed with a certain appointed compound of delicate perfumes:—and so precious ointment became the type of the anointing of the Spirit of God, and of that acceptableness which comes to men through Jesus Christ, who is a sweet savour unto the Lord God. When you understand that precious ointment, or sweet perfumed oil, was very precious to the Jew, first, because of the pleasure it gave to him and the healthy influence which he believed it exerted upon himself; next, because it made him pleasurable to others; and, next, because in its highest sacred sense it prepared him to come before God; you see why "precious ointment" was so much held in esteem. But Solomon says that a good name is better than that. I do not think he merely meant a good reputation; and yet it would be true if he referred only to an honourable character among his neighbours, for it is a good thing for a man to stand high in the esteem of his fellow-men, and he ought never

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to lose their respect except for one cause, namely, for the sake of standing in higher esteem before God. The faithful follower of Jesus must be content to part with name and fame if through obedience to Christ he is evil spoken of; yea, in such a case he may rejoice and be exceeding glad when they say all manner of evil against him falsely for Christ's name's sake. Yet even then it is a sharp sorrow to have lost one's good name among men, though for Christ's sake it should be borne right cheerfully. Every good man would be glad if it were possible to have the good word of all his fellow-men, for this is the groundwork of social peace, and would be in itself good and pleasant, were it not that sin destroys it, and turns it into a "woe" when all men speak well of us.

I believe that the text has a deeper meaning than this; for a man truly has a good name if he deserves to be held in high esteem, though he may for Christ's sake be in disrepute. His name is good, whatever men may say about it. His name is, indeed, all the better in the sight of God because he has been slandered and reproached for the truth's sake. His name shall shine out like the stars of heaven when Christ comes—even the name of the man of whom the world was not worthy. It is after all a small matter to be judged of man's judgment, our record is on high. A good character may be understood here, and assuredly that is better than the rarest luxury of kings.

Consider it spiritually, and, dear brethren, what is a good name? A good name is a name that is written in the Lamb's book of life, and that is better than the sweetest of all ointments. Oh, that I may find my name recorded in some corner of the page among the sinners saved by grace. The very thought of that has a savour in it which no earthly delicacy can rival. Oh, how blessed to be among the chosen of God, the redeemed of Christ Jesus, beloved of the Father from before the foundation of the world. "A good name." Why, that must be a name written upon the breastplate of the great High Priest. If you could have gone up to the high priest of old you would have read there "Reuben," "Simeon," "Levi," "Judah," "Dan," "Gad," "Naphtali," and the like; and they were all good names when once they were engraved there. What a blessed place to have your name inscribed—not upon a jewel that shall hang on the breast of a man, but upon the very heart of Jesus Christ your Lord. If you could see your name written on the palms of his hands you would say, "It is a good name that is written there. Blessed be the Lord that ever I had that name, insignificant as it is. Though it is a name that has been ridiculed, though it is a name that has been bandied about and kicked like a football through the world, yet it is a blessed name, for it is written on the palms of Jesus' hands." It is so if we are the Lord's own people, and are walking the walk of faith. Jesus says, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." That is a good name which is recorded in the Lamb's book of life, and engraved upon the breastplate of the Saviour. Do you not think so?

Connected with this, I may say that a name that is written among the living in Zion is a good name. Oh, there is nothing like it. Some men are very anxious to get their names upon the roll of this club or of that, or of some wonderful secret society,—or to get their names into the programme. It is thought to be a wonderful thing to be a nobleman,

though it is better far to be a noble man. But the best list of names on earth seems to me to be the list of the people of God. I should count it a higher honour to be inscribed on the church book of a humble company of baptized believers meeting in a barn than to wear a name imported by the Conqueror, and written in the roll of Battle Abbey. The pedigree of saintship confers honour such as angels recognize; all else they think little of. Are you one of God's believing people? Have you taken up your cross, resolved to follow Jesus? Do you, as a servant, and as a soldier, bear his name as your Master and Captain? Then you have a good name, and there is a sweetness about it better than the perfume of precious ointment.

If, dear brothers and sisters, you go on, after having your names inscribed in the church of God, to get a beloved name among God's people, through divine grace, it will be better than precious ointment. Better than all the expensive luxuries which wealth could purchase to you will it be to have a name esteemed for lowly piety or sacred courage. How sweet, for instance, to be like that woman who brought our Lord precious ointment, and he paid her back with a good name, immortalizing her in the gospels, for he said, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." A humble woman like Dorcas may make garments for the poor, and this shall be better than precious ointment. A simple trader like Lydia may entertain the servants of God—constraining them to come into her house; and this shall be better than precious ointment. And a lowly man may so live as to adorn the gospel of God his Saviour—may so speak as to bring one and another to the Saviour's feet; and this shall be better than a blaze of courtly honour. "A good name": that is a name for humility, a name for love and affection, a name for liberality, a name for zeal, a name for warm-heartedness, a name for prayerfulness, a name among the people of God for being a whole-hearted, sincere man, a name for being one who is ready to help you in time of trouble, a name like that of Barnabas, the son of consolation:—a good name of this sort it should be our ambition to win and to wear. A good name that shall arise out of our exhibiting a compound of many precious virtues shall be better than an ointment formed of the rarest spices, however pleasant it may be. You may be in the church and yet you may not have a good name as a member of it. I mean as to your own personal character as a Christian; for some professors are in the pot of ointment, but I wish we could pick them out, for they are flies, and they spoil everything. There are such in this church—oh that they had gone elsewhere! If they would but have flown into a pot of the world's honey, or something of that kind! But for them to get into the church's ointment is a great pity. May God grant that you and I may never be dead flies in the pot of ointment. Some get a name in the church for quarrelling and fault-finding. "Oh," people say, "if anybody can pick a hole in the sermon, I know who it is." You need only have half-a-dozen words with this crab-apple critic and you surely and speedily lose what enjoyment you have had during the service. Alas, that many Christian women have not a good name, for they are addicted to gossiping. A word to the wise on this matter will, I hope, be enough. I will not at this time dive deeply into any of your

faults, whatever they may be, but will cover them all over with this truth—A good reputation, well earned among your Christian brethren, is better than precious ointment.

It is of persons who have this good character, and are known by the sweet savour of their lives, that the latter part of the text is spoken,—“The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

You must have a good name,—you must be written among the living in Zion, written on the heart of Christ, written in the Lamb’s book of life, or else the text is not true of you; and, alas, though the day of your birth was a bad day, the day of your death will be a thousand times worse; for when you die, my hearer, recollect what will happen to you unless you have that good name. You will be driven from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power, and begin to feel the terrors of his vengeance; and then, when the day of judgment comes, God will prove that he is able to destroy both body and soul in hell; for there must you dwell in everlasting punishment, prepared for the devil and his angels, so that the day of your death will be a day of darkness and not of light, and it will be better for you that you had never been born.

But now, if you are one of God’s people, trusting in him, look forward to the day of your death as being better than the day of your birth. It is possible that you may never die, since the Lord Jesus may suddenly come a second time; but if this should not occur in our day, we shall in due course fulfil our service and fall asleep. At this hour, ere yet the sand in the glass shall all be run, the long-expected Lord may suddenly appear in his glory; therefore let us stand ready, as men that wait for their Lord, with our loins girt and our lamps burning. But if he do not come for the next hundred years—and he may not, for our Lord has not committed to us a knowledge of the times and seasons—then we shall die; and in that case it is no small consolation that “the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.”

I. First, then, OUR DEATHDAY IS BETTER THAN OUR BIRTHDAY: and it is so for this among other reasons—“*Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof.*”

When we are born we begin life, but what will that life be? Friends say, “Welcome, little stranger.” Ah, but what kind of reception will the stranger get when he is no longer a new comer? Very likely he is not long in the world before he begins to feel the poverty of his parents, and perhaps the misery of an unholy home. A troop of infantile diseases are waiting around him; and the little candle that is newly lit is in great danger of being blown out. Infancy is a very dangerous passage for a tiny boat unfitted to bear rough buffetings. Those first few years are full of rocks and quicksands, and many scarce begin life before they end it. He who is newly born and is ordained to endure through a long life is like a warrior who puts on his harness for battle; and is not he in a better case who puts it off because he has won the victory? Ask any soldier which he likes best, the first shot in the battle or the sound which means “Cease firing, for the victory is won.” The soldier does not deliberate a moment; there is no room for question. Since the day of a believer’s death is his time of triumph and of victory, it is better than the day of the first shot—the day of

one's birth. When we were born we set out on our journey; but when we die we end our weary march in the Father's house above. Surely it is better to have come to the end of the tiresome pilgrimage than to have commenced it. We wave the handkerchief, and bid good-bye to those who start upon a long voyage, and it is meet that they should be made as cheerful as they can be; but, surely, it is a better day when at last they reach their port, all danger over, and come to their desired haven. So, then, it is better to die than to begin to live, if we be indeed the Lord's people.

Better is the day of death than our birthday, because *about the birthday there hangs uncertainty*. I cannot tell you, good woman, what is to become of the little child who is pressed to your bosom this evening. God bless it, and make it a comfort to you, and an honour to his church! But it is all matter of hope as yet. Children are certain cares, they say, and uncertain blessings. I hardly like the phrase. They are blessings anyhow; but there is certainly this about them: we cannot tell what will become of them when they grow up and come under the influence of evil. You look upon a youth as he grows up, and you feel, "I cannot quite see what you will be. You may be led astray by temptation; or by divine grace you may cleanse your way. You may be useful and honourable; or you may be dissolute and degraded." Everything is uncertain about the child on his birthday; but everything is certain about the saint on his deathday. I heard this morning of a dear friend who had fallen asleep. When I wrote to his wife I said, "Concerning him we speak with certainty. You sorrow not as those that are without hope. A long life of walking with God proved that he was one of God's people, and we know that for such there remains joy without temptation, without sorrow, without end, for ever and ever." Oh, then, as much as certainty is better than uncertainty, the day of the saint's death is better than the day of his birth.

So, too, in things which are certain the saint's deathday is preferable to the beginning of life, for we know that when the child is born he is born to sorrow. Whatever else is uncertain about him, we are quite sure that those little eyes will weep; that those little limbs will know weariness and pain; and that his little heart will be distracted sooner or later by many griefs. We know this, for "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." No man has ever been able to find a perfectly smooth road through this mortal life. Trials must and will befall, and your little one who is born to-day is born to an inheritance of grief, like his father, like his mother, who prophesied it as it were by her own pangs. But look, now, at the saint when he dies. It is absolutely certain that he has done with sorrow, done with pain. We know that they shall die no more; "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Now, surely, the day in which we are certain that sorrow is over must be better than the day in which we are certain that sorrow is on the road. For this reason we set up the headstone of the grave above the tablet which records the birth.

Ay, and this holds good about subsequent birthdays. It is wise thoughtfully and cheerfully to mark each birthday. It should be a holy day in every Christian's case—a day of grateful thanksgiving that we

have come so far upon the road of life. It is a very blessed thing to sit down on the milestone and say, "Well, now, I have come twenty miles—thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy miles of my journey. I shall never tread those miles over again. So many troubles are past: so many waves have risen that will never wash over me a second time; so many tossings to and fro I have endured, and I shall never feel them any more." Every man should say at the end of a sickness, "Thank God, that is gone. I shall not suffer a repetition of that self-same sickness; I shall not feel those pains over again; I shall not groan through those same weary nights for a second time." For every pang that shoots through the bone you should say, "That bone will not ache that pain over again, at any rate." Be joyful that you are so far on your journey! There remains that other portion of the journey; long leagues of pilgrimage may lie beyond. There are still battles to fight, mountains to climb, dark nights in which one sighs for light; still temptation; still sin. Ay, but when we get to the day of one's death then the whole journey lies behind. It is all over now. On your coming to die there is nothing left to do but to die. All else is done. The battle is fought, and the victory is won for ever. Oh, is not that better than even the best birthday that we have ever had, good as they have been, and cause for thanksgiving as each one certainly has been?

I think, then, I need not dwell longer on this point. "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth."

II. Now I will give the same thoughts in another form. The day of death is BETTER TO THE BELIEVER THAN ALL HIS HAPPY DAYS.

What were his happy days? I shall take him as a man, and I will pick out some days that are often thought to be happy. There is the day of a man's *coming of age*, when he feels that he is a man, especially if he has an estate to come into. That is a day of great festivity. You have seen pictures of "Coming of age in the olden time," when the joy of the young squire seemed to spread itself over all the tenants and all the farm labourers: everybody rejoiced. Ah, that is all very well, but when believers die they do in a far higher sense come of age, and enter upon their heavenly estates. Here, you know, in this life we are very much as children who are under governors and tutors, and we differ little from servants. We still have to be chastened, and kept under rule, and denied much which is nevertheless ours. We have many good things kept from us because we are not able yet to appreciate them. "Now we know in part." It is only in a small measure that we come into possession, enjoying only the earnest of the inheritance. Ay, but—

"Then shall I see, and hear, and know
All I desired or wish'd below;
And every power find sweet employ
In that eternal world of joy."

Then shall I pluck the grapes from those vines that I have read of as enriching the vales of Eshcol; then shall I lie down and drink full draughts of the river of God, which is full of water; then shall I know even as I am known, and see no more through a glass darkly, but face to face. Speak of heirs, of heirs coming into their estates! Why, our day of death shall be such a day as that. What a jubilee day it will

be! If we were really in our senses the thought of fearing death would be ridiculous. No young man is afraid of coming to be one-and-twenty. No; he says, "Fly away, fly away, days and nights. I shall be glad to get out of my nonage, out of my infancy, and to come into my full manhood, and into possession of everything." So might we say, "Fly away, years! Come, grey hairs. Fly away, years, and bring me into possession of things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, which God hath prepared for them that love him."

Another very happy day with a man is the day of his *marriage*: who does not rejoice then? What cold heart is there which does not beat with joy on that day? But on the day of death we shall enter more fully into the joy of our Lord, and into that blessed marriage union which is established between him and ourselves. Then we shall enter into the guest-chamber where the supper is to be spread, and we shall wait a while with joy, the bridegroom being with us, till the word shall be given, and the trumpet note shall ring out, and then we shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not to look at his guests, but to be ourselves part and parcel of that blessed bride, the Lamb's wife, in whom Christ finds all his heart's content. Oh, yes, we may long for our departure because it is to the saint a marriage day in which he shall be "with Christ," which is far better: and, as the bride longeth for the wedding, so may the heart that is full of faith long for the time when we shall be for ever with the Lord.

There are days with men in business that are happy days, because they are *days of gain*. They get some sudden windfall, they prosper in business, or perhaps there are long months of prosperity in which all goes well with them, and God is giving them the desires of their heart. But, oh, beloved, there is no gain like the gain of our departure to the Father; the greatest of all gains is that which we shall know when we pass out of the world of trouble into the land of triumph. "To die is gain." As for prosperity, what worldly prosperity can be compared with the eternal years in which we shall dwell in infinite felicity above? To die is to enter upon days of peace, rest, joy, satisfaction; and hence the day of our death is better than our happiest days.

There are days of *honour*, brethren, when a man is promoted in office, or receives applause from his fellow-men. But what a day of honour that will be for you and me, if we are carried by angels into Abraham's bosom! Our honourable escort will manifest how highly the Lord thinks of us. Oh, the honours that will be heaped upon the saints when they shall be recognized in glory as brethren of Christ, heirs of God, joint heirs with the Redeemer!

Days of *health* are happy days, too. But what health can equal the perfect wholeness of a spirit in whom the good Physician has displayed his utmost skill? Days of recovery from sickness are happy days: but, oh, to be clean recovered—to go where "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." When Jehovah Rophi shall restore our whole spirit to perfectness then will a new gladness take possession of us.

We enjoy very happy days of *social friendship*, when hearts warm with hallowed intercourse, when one can sit a while with a friend, or rest in the midst of one's family. Yes, but no day of social enjoyment will match the day of death. Some of us expect to meet troops of blessed

ones that have gone home long ago, whom we never shall forget. We have priceless friends over yonder, and the bliss of reunion will be sweet. Some of you old people have more friends in heaven than you have on earth; you may forget all sorrow as to those you will leave in the joy of meeting those with whom you will be united again. What family greetings there will be! Mother has gone; father has gone; uncles and aunts that were in the Lord, and brothers and sisters too, are all gone before; and all these are waiting for us, and we shall soon be in full fellowship with them. Best of all, *he* has gone before whom our hearts love, and who is more to us than brother, sister, and mother. Oh, the bliss of meeting with our risen Lord! Oh, the joy of meeting in him all that are truly our own kin! The saints will meet around the throne, an unbroken family; not one of God's children will be away. We shall have no brothers or sisters who will not be there. "Oh," say you, "I am afraid that we have some who are still unconverted, and who will not be there." They will not be your brothers and sisters then. Ties of merely natural kinship will come to an end; only spiritual relationship will last and survive. We shall have none to mourn over; our kindred will all be in glory. Those that were truly related to us in the bonds of everlasting life shall all be there. One might wish for it to come soon for the joy of being for ever with the people of God, sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

III. In the third place, going a step farther, the day of a believer's death is **BETTER THAN HIS HOLY DAYS ON EARTH.**

I think that the best holy day I ever spent (yes, I think I must put it as high as that,) was the day of my *conversion*. There was a novelty and freshness about that first day which made it like the day in which a man first sees the light after having been long blind. My conversion day, shall I ever forget it?—when my heart began to beat with spiritual life, and the lungs of my soul began to heave with prayer, and the hands of my soul were stretched out to grasp my Lord, and the eyes of my soul beheld his beauty. Ay, that was a very blessed sight, but what will it be to see him face to face? What will the first five minutes in heaven be? Surely those dawning moments will be for ever remembered, and spoken of by holy beings as they commune with one another concerning their delights. Oh, for a celestial visitant to tell us of his experience in the first five minutes in heaven! No; I think he had better not, because we might be frightened at him, and he would talk language that we could not understand. He would say things which it were not lawful for a man to utter. Brother from the glory land, you may go back; it were better that we did not hear your story of the better country. We will think of it, and begin expecting it. It will certainly be better to see the Lord in death than when we first of all saw him here below.

Since then we have known many blessed days; our *Sabbaths*, for instance. We can never give up the Lord's day. Precious and dear unto my soul are those sweet rests of love—days that God has hedged about to make them his own, that they may be ours. A young man said to me yesterday, when he came to join the church, "I often wish that all the week was made up of Sundays." I thought, "Yes, and so do I," only I could not always be preaching. I should want to come down and take

a turn at hearing; although it is always precious to talk about God's word. Oh, our blessed Sabbaths! Well, there is this about the day of one's death—we shall then enter upon an eternal Sabbath. We shall go

“Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end.”

And the glory Sabbaths will be real Sabbaths, never disturbed or distracted; blessed Sabbaths, shut out from sinners and from that filthy conversation which often vexes us even on the Sabbath day. “There remaineth a rest for the people of God.”

“To that our labouring souls aspire
With ardent pangs of strong desire.”

Our *communion* days have been very holy days. It has been very sweet to sit at the Lord's table, and have fellowship with Jesus in the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine; but sweeter far will it be to commune with him in the paradise above, and that we shall do on the day of our death. I might go on mentioning all our holy days one after another; but whichever you should select as the season of your highest joy on earth I should say of the best of them, “Yes, but the day of one's death, as ushering us into a higher and holier state, is better than any of those days.” Those days have been good, I am not going to depreciate them, but to bless the Lord for every one of them. When we say that a second thing is “better,” it is supposed that the first thing has some goodness about it. Ay, and our holy days on earth have been good; fit rehearsals of the jubilee beyond the river. When you and I enter heaven, it will not be going from bad to good, but from good to better. The change will be remarkable, but it will not be so great a change as thoughtless persons would imagine.

First, there will be no change of nature. The same nature which God gave us when we were regenerated—the spiritual nature—is that which will enjoy the heavenly state. We shall not carry with us our depraved nature; we do not want to do so, I am sure. Mr. Ready-to-halt, in Bunyan's “Pilgrim,” performed his journey on crutches, but when he died he threw them away. He did not want to carry his crutches into the land of perfection: and we shall carry no sinful infirmities with us into Paradise, nor, indeed, any infirmities at all. As to Mr. Feeblemind, he gave orders that his feeble mind should be buried in a dunghill: he did not want to import a trembling heart into the skies. But all that is good about us, all that is really ourselves as we have been begotten again in Christ Jesus, all that will go to heaven, without loss of any portion thereof. I shall be the same man there that I am here; and I have not the slightest doubt that you will know me. At any rate, you will be bigger fools in heaven than you are here if you do not. Did I hear some one reply, “We shall not know you in the disembodied state, for here we only recognize you by your outward appearance”? I answer, Many of you know me in another manner than after the flesh; you not only know me by my looks; but you know my spirit. If I could get out of my body, and I could not use a voice, but yet could influence your spirits by my spirit, you would know my spirit. You know what spirit I am of. I will not try to describe myself, but you know me. I know you do. Nobody is exactly like me

in some traits of character : each one stands alone. Nobody is exactly like you, dear friend ; so that there will be peculiar points by which to distinguish man from man. We shall know each other certainly. Yes, and we shall be the same persons ; and when our bodies rise they will be the same bodies. "Every seed its own body,"—changed and perfected, but still preserving its identity. On earth we have had good days, because we have had a good nature given us by the Holy Spirit, and we shall possess the same nature above, only more fully grown and purged from all that hinders it.

We shall follow the same employments above as we have followed here. "Oh dear," says one, "I hope not. I do not want to work hard there as I have had to do here." No, perhaps not ; but I mean the employments of our spirits will be similar to what they have been while we have been in the world. What are the employments of our spirits here ? Why, one of the sweetest of them is to sing the Lord's praises. We shall spend eternity in adoring the Most High. To draw near to God in communion—that is one of our most blessed employments. We shall do it there, and take our fill of it. Nor is this all, for we shall serve God in glory. I do not know what God will want us to do in heaven, I have never been there to see ; but I am sure that he will make use of us. Does he not say, "They shall see his face, and his servants shall serve him" ? Oh, yes ; he has something for me to do up there, and for you to do, too. You active-spirited ones, you shall find an intense delight in continuing to do the same things as to spirit as you do here, namely, adoring and magnifying and spreading abroad the saving name of Jesus in whatever place you may be.

We shall certainly possess the same enjoyments, for our richest enjoyments as saints are found in fellowship with Christ and with one another, and we shall have these above. We shall live upon Christ. We shall rejoice in God there as we do here. And there is one thing I like to think of—we shall have the same company. I was visiting a poor old woman who was near to death, and she said to me, "One thing makes me feel quite safe about where I am going ; I believe that I shall go to my own company ; and for the last sixty years I have never had any company but the Lord's people ; and if a stranger has come in here, and begun to talk about worldly things in a carnal way, I have wished him gone. I said to myself, 'The Lord won't take me away from my own people. Surely he will let me go where they go ; and if I go where those people go that I love, I know that I shall be happy.'" So, dying believer, you will not change company ; only the company will be all improved, and you will be improved as much as any of them. It will be the same company, and this makes it look so much like going home. The day of our death has nothing so very strange and mysterious about it as to make us fear it. You and I ought to live like people who, when they hear a knock at the door, do not go into fits at the startling sound. Some people are terribly alarmed at a knock or a ring because they have not paid their rent, and they are afraid that somebody is after them for money. You and I have paid our debts, or rather, they have been all paid for us. The Lord Jesus Christ has set us free ; and when death comes and knocks at our door, all that we shall have to do will be to answer the summons and go with God's messenger at once. Our friends will say, "He is gone ;"

and if we have lived so that we have had a good name, that is better than precious ointment; they will know where we have gone; and if they lament on that account they will be very foolish, for they ought rather to say, "Thank God that our friends have entered into their joy and rest." There was a dear mother, a woman of great faith, who loved her daughter very much, but she loved her Lord more, and when her dear daughter was dying she kissed her, and said to her, "My dear girl, you will be in heaven within a few hours, and I congratulate you. The thought of your joy fills me with joy concerning you, and I cannot weep. I congratulate you, and wish I was going with you." Let us think of death after that holy manner.

IV. I have not time to finish my sermon. At least, I have time to finish it, but not to continue it as long as I would. I was going to say, in the fourth place, that the day of a saint's death is BETTER THAN THE WHOLE OF HIS DAYS PUT TOGETHER, because his days here are days of dying. The moment we begin to live we commence to die.

"Every beating pulse we tell
Leaves but the number less."

Death is *the end of dying*. On the day of the believer's death dying is for ever done with. The saints who are with God shall never die any more. Life is wrestling, struggling; but death is the end of conflict: it is rest—victory. Life is full of sinning. Blessed be God, death is the end of that; no transgression or iniquity shall follow us into heaven. Life is longing, sighing, crying, pining, desiring. Heaven is enjoying, possessing, delighting one's self in God. This life is failure, disappointment, regret. Such emotions are all over when the day of death comes, for glory dawns upon us, with its satisfaction and intense content.

The day of our death will be *the day of our cure*. There are some diseases which, in all probability, some of us never will get quite rid of till the last Physician comes, and he will settle the matter. One gentle touch of his hand, and we shall be cured for ever. All infirmities, as well as sicknesses, will vanish in our last hours. Blind sister, you will have your eyes. You that have lost your hearing shall listen to the songs of angels, and enter into the most refined of their harmonies. You who must limp to your graves shall dance by-and-by. Infirmities you shall have none. Death will also be the cure of old age. No doctor can help you about that; but this doctor will end all. You shall renew your youth like the eagle's. You shall be girt about with power when your body rises from the grave, and till then your soul shall enjoy all the freshness and juvenility of youth. You shall be at your prime in glory.

Our death day will be *the loss of all losses*. Life is made up of losses, but death loses losses. Life is full of crosses, but death is the cross that brings crosses to an end. Death is the last enemy, and turns out to be the death of every enemy.

Dear friends, put all your days together; they shall not equal that last day which shall be to you the beginning of days of another sort. The day of our death is *the beginning of our best days*. Sometimes even that part of a dying day which is spent on earth is the best that the dying believer has ever lived. I have seen believers die, and if anything can convince a man of the reality of religion, of the truth of

the Scriptures, and of the power of the Spirit, it is the death of saints. I have seen many persons who seemed to be as much dying of their joy as of their disease, they were so happy. Their eyes, their face, their whole bearing were those of persons in whom the utmost pain was forgotten in an excess of joy, while weakness was swallowed up in the delights of the heaven which was dawning upon them. I believe that angels come and meet certain departing ones, that they come trooping outside the gate, and that dying ones frequently see that which is supernatural. I am not dreaming. I believe that they actually see what eye hath not seen, and that there comes upon them a light which is neither of the sun, nor of the moon. At any rate, they speak words of wondrous import. Dying children have spoken words which certainly they never learnt, for none have ever heard the like before; and other departing ones have uttered words of rapture and ecstasy and almost delirium of bliss; for Christ has come to them, and they have seen the King in his beauty, even in the border land before they have crossed the river and entered into Canaan. "Is this to die?" said one. "Well, then," said he, "it is worth while to live even to enjoy the bliss of dying." The holy calm of some and the transport of others prove that better is the day of death in their case than the day of birth, or all their days on earth.

And then that later part of the day which is spent among the angels! They breakfast with Christ on earth, but they sup with him in heaven. Oh, that eventide of the day! Then to think that it shall be without end: for ever happy, for ever triumphant, and for ever more and more so; for "from glory unto glory" makes us look for progress even there. We shall rise from seeing Christ to seeing him yet more, and to discovering more and more beauties in him; we shall ascend from one perfection to another perfection; from fulness up to our capacity to an enlarged capacity and an equal fulness; from glory unto glory; from sunlight to Godlight; from Godlight to the light of God yet more received and enjoyed.

There! I cannot go farther. Good night "till the day break and the shadows flee away"; and then you and I will know in ten minutes more than all the bench of bishops could tell us in a year. You will know more in half a second than I could tell you if I were to keep you here the live-long night. Only mind you do not miss the way, one of you. Mind you do not miss the way! Turn to the right, by the cross, and keep straight on. God lead you by his Holy Spirit.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxix.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—821, 829, 828.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A HASTY EXPRESSION PENITENTLY RETRACTED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."—Psalm xxxi. 22.

THAT is a bit of genuine experience, honestly told, in the most natural manner. How glad we ought to be that David never fell into the hand of an ordinary biographer, for such a piece of weakness as this text records would have been carefully repressed, lest the good man's reputation should suffer. It was only a hasty expression, and every friendly biographer would have felt that it ought to be taken as unspoken. Here, however, stands this piece of human weakness upon David's life-page, and we are right glad of it: it is a comfort to us little folks to perceive the champions were men of like passions with ourselves. As a bee sucks honey out of nettles, so does faith find comfort even in the failings of David; but we must mind that we do not turn his errors into excuses, for that were to extract poisons instead of wholesome juices.

The experience of a good man, of a great man, of a tried man, like David, is exceedingly instructive and impressive. The children of God delight in doctrinal preaching, and in practical preaching, but I believe that nothing is so sweet to them as experimental preaching, by which we are not only taught truth in the head and in the hand, but something is said of truth in the heart. This is it which endears the Book of Psalms to the whole church, and makes the explanation of that volume so important. Nothing more sweetly cheers the struggler after better things than to hear of the life-struggles of godly men. Behold, then, a written confession, dictated by the penitent heart of David, who herein withdraws the curtain from his own innermost life. I should not wonder if his experience should turn out to be very like your own; for, as in water face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man, and this is the reason why the experience of one man is his best means of interpreting the feelings of another.

Take heed, however, when you are reading the histories of the saints that you use them with prudence, for it is not all the experience of a Christian that is Christian experience. A believer may experience much which he does not experience as a believer, but because his believing is failing him. Sometimes we are rather to regard the experience of good

men as beacons to warn us from rocks than as lighthouses to show us where the harbour may be. Rheumatism is certainly a human disease, but I would by no means recommend a person to seek after it in order to prove his manhood. We can well do without some things which were characteristic of certain eminent men, since they did not adorn or strengthen them, but rather disfigured and weakened them. In David's case, it is well to follow David, but it is better to follow David's son; for David sometimes went astray like a lost sheep, but David's son was that great Shepherd of the sheep whose every step it is safe for the flock to follow. Do not let us imitate David in his speaking in haste, or in his saying, "I am cut off from before thine eyes;" but at the same time let us take care that we closely copy him in confessing conscious fault, as he here does; in crying to God in the hour of trouble, as he tells us he did; and also in bearing witness to the exceeding goodness of God, notwithstanding our faultiness, as he here bears witness when he says, "Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."

For our edification we will consider the text thus: here is, first, *an utterance of unbelief*—"I am cut off from before thine eyes"; secondly, here is incidentally mentioned *an effort of struggling faith*,—he says, "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee"; and, thirdly, here is *a testimony of gratitude*, for David joyfully declares that, notwithstanding his unbelief, the Lord heard and answered his cries. O for the touch of the Holy Spirit to make this outline into a living sermon. Here are the altar and the wood: O Holy Ghost, be thou the fire!

I. Let us begin by listening to AN UTTERANCE OF UNBELIEF—"I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes."

Note here, first, that *unbelief is generally talkative*—"I said." It had been better for him not to have thought it even, but when he did think thus wrongly it was most unwise to speak the thought. I have heard it said, "If it is in the mind it may as well come out," but this is not true. If I had a rattlesnake in a box on this platform, I think you would none of you vote for the creature's being let loose. Poison in a phial is deadly, but it will hurt no one until the cork is drawn, and then we cannot tell how far the mischief may go. Lions and tigers and vipers are best shut up; the wider range you give them the more you empower them to do mischief. If thou hast an ill thought, repent of it, but do not repeat it: it may harm *thee*, but it will not harm others if thou let it die within doors. Do as David did in another case, when he had a very ugly thought; he said, "If I shall speak thus I shall offend against the generation of thy people," and he would not, therefore, put his thought into words lest he should offend the godly. If thou hast a hard thought of God, utter it not in the presence of his own children. Wouldst thou grieve thy brethren? Utter it not in the presence of his enemies. Wouldst thou open their mouths to speak against him? Where wilt thou utter it? Speak it not upon earth, for it is his footstool. May it not in prayer, for thou art bowing at his throne. Say it nowhere, for God will hear it if none else should. Bury in silence that offspring of thy soul of which it has good cause to be ashamed; let it be cast overboard as the untimely figs, and consumed upon the rubbish heap of

forgotten things. Alas, unbelief does not understand holding its tongue. We read that the children of Israel murmured in their tents; they could not be quiet at home. They complained of God in their families, and very soon the murmuring in the tents became a murmuring throughout all the camp, till they gathered together in crowds against God and his servant Moses. Yes, unbelief will prattle. I have known believing men slow of speech, but when a man has anything to complain of he is fluent even to overflowing; he will go from one neighbour to another, and lament the badness of trade, how the crops are failing, how ill he is himself, what a sickly family he has, and a legion of other griefs. The gazette of sorrow has long columns, and is generally crowded with items; it is published every hour of the day, and you can get a new edition at almost any house, for unbelief must publish its inventions. The strife of the many tongues of unbelief causes much mischief in the world: its quiver is full, and its arrows are death. It would have been wiser for David to have bit his tongue than to have said what he ought not to have said: however, this much is clear,—unbelief is generally talkative.

Our next observation shall be that *the utterances of unbelief are generally hasty*—"I said in my haste." There was no reason for saying such a thing at all, and certainly not for being in a hurry to say it; for he said unto God, "I am cut off from before thine eyes." Look at this statement well. It is a very solemn thing to make such a declaration. See if it be founded on fact. Do you think it is true? Search a little more. Set your supposed condition in another light, and see whether, after all, you may not have made a mistake. But no. Unbelief blunders it out, right or wrong: "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes." I suppose the reason for the hot haste is this—that when a man's mind is much distracted and driven to and fro he wants to come to some sort of conclusion; and, though that conclusion may be totally false, and may be as far from right as possible, yet some sort of a conclusion his troubled thoughts require. John Bunyan says of the pilgrim that he was much tumbled up and down in his thoughts. It is a forcible Saxon expression, and most of you know what it signifies. You do not know whether you are on your head or your heels, as the old saying is, you are in a horrible confusion, and countless difficulties surround you; and so it is that you blunder at a conclusion, and say in your haste what should not be said. But why in such haste to write bitter things against yourself? Why in such haste to write your own condemnation? Why in such haste to misjudge your God? Stop a bit, brother. Stop a bit! There is time enough for this when the worst has come to the worst. Wait awhile, for when the brain is heated waiting will cool the brow, and prepare a place for wisdom. Why are you so desperately eager to play the fool? Know that the utterances of unbelief are hasty; and hasty things are raw and sour, and cannot display the maturity of prudence. What a man says in his haste he generally has to repent in his leisure. If it is a good thing, say it at once; but if it be a doubtful thing, stop; then stop again; then stop again; and if the stopping should end in your not speaking there will be a little more of golden silence in the world. I have heard say that one of the greatest points in good speaking is to know when to pause. I do not

know about that, but I am sure that one of the wisest things in good living is to know when to pause, to stop, to question, and to deliberate. To go blindly on as though it were neck or nothing with you is to make sure shipwreck some day or other. Do nothing till you are sure that it is right to do it, and say nothing till you know that what you say is true. Hasty deeds and hasty words make up the most horrible parts of human history: the warnings of the past forbid all recklessness. Nevertheless, when once we grow despondent this is our temptation, and it will be well to bit and bridle both mind and tongue lest we fall into the evil.

Frequently *when a man speaks in haste his expressions are the result of his temper.* "We are quick tempered," some will say. If you are quick tempered it is very likely that you are also quick tongued, and this is a great pity. You speak in a moment what you cannot unsay in a century. Now, it is very ill when we are in a temper with God. Is that ever the case? Oh yes. I fear that often professing Christians are out of temper with God. A good woman was wearing deep mourning years after the loss of him whom she mourned; and a Quaker said to her, "Friend, I perceive thou hast not forgiven God yet." There he hit the nail on the head. Many have not forgiven God yet: they have taken umbrage against him either because of bereavement, or loss of property, or sickness, or disappointment, or trial, and they keep on sulking because they cannot have their own way. Surely they have never heard the question, "Should it be according to thy mind?" Wilt thou sit on the throne and judge thy God? Wilt thou

"Snatch from his hands the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his judgment, be the God of God"?

This is blasphemy; and yet too often such blasphemy enters into the human heart. Who is to be master? Are *we* to be lords over all? Who is to order providence? In whose hands should be the issues from death? Is God to wait on us, and ask our will, and do our bidding? That is, indeed, the turning of things upside down, and it cannot, must not be. It is because we get into wayward, foolish, rebellious tempers with God that therefore we speak in our haste what we ought not even to think. Thus David penitently confesses, "I said in my haste. I am cut off from before thine eyes."

Again, it is very clear from the text that *the utterances of unbelief are frequently exaggerated.* "I am cut off from before thine eyes." No, David; no, no. It is not so: you are cut off from the esteem of men through slander, and you are cut off from the friendship of those who once professed to love you, whose minds have been soured by an evil report; but you are not cut off from God. It is true you are cut off from the public services of God's house, and obliged to hide away in the rocks and caves of the earth: that is true; but you are not cut off from before God's eyes. You know you are not, and why do you say you are? Oh, but some people always talk big about everything; and it is a great pity, because it is so near lying that I do not know whether for not the same thing. There must be a very narrow line, fine as a of thy dge, between a lie and the unguarded expressions of exaggeration. the wallle talk about their trials on a scale which allows a mile for

every inch. Their afflictions are awful, they are dreadful, they are without parallel. There were never any like them, and there never will be again. They endure the most extraordinary pains, and the most wonderful afflictions, and they are altogether quite equal to Job and Jeremiah rolled into one. Never did any persons undergo sufferings comparable to theirs. You cannot sit down by their side to comfort them but they will tell you at once that you do not know anything about the great deeps whereon they are doing business: you are only knee-deep in the waters of trouble, while all God's waves and billows have gone over them. I meet with some who are almost impossibly afflicted; their tribulations exceed that which is common to man, and that which is uncommon too; but this may be accounted for by the large organ of imagination with which they are endowed. By using this imagination to paint their spectacles they are soon able to see all manner of dreadful visions, and they talk accordingly. That is the way of our unbelief, it will talk at random about trials and troubles. This is not pretty. God does not love his children to talk in that fashion. The lips that speak truth are his delight; and if our unbelief will not speak truth—and it very seldom does, perhaps never does—then it is a great pity that it cannot hold its tongue. May I ask if any friend here has been exaggerating his trouble? Is there any sister here who is fretting out of all reason—making a great deal out of what may be much, but is not everything? Then stand rebuked at this hour. Your cup is not all gall. Your bread is not all turned to ashes. All your comforts have not fled; many a mercy is left you. Come, come, friend, we are not quite cut off from before the Lord; let us leave off exaggeration lest we be guilty of falsehood.

Once more, *the utterances of unbelief dishonour God*. "I am cut off," says David, "from before thine eyes." He does, as it were, blame the Lord. Before thy very eyes have I suffered this; thou hast so forsaken me and given me over to the enemy, that I am cut off from before thine eyes. Why dost thou not deliver me? He spoke in his haste, as if God, at the very least, had been forgetful, even if he had not been untender and unfaithful. "I am cut off from before thine eyes." It would greatly dishonour God if he did suffer one that could say, "In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust," to be cut off from before his eyes. It would be contrary to his promise; for he has said that he will not suffer the righteous to perish. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry": there never was a godly man cut off from God yet, and there never will be till time shall be no more. All the attributes of God forbid the destruction of a soul that is resting on the Almighty arm; and yet the unbelieving heart declares that such a destruction has taken place in its own case. Oh, wondrous unbelief, to think the Lord to be so unrighteous as to forget our work of faith and labour of love, to forget his children, to cast away his own, his covenanted ones, with whom he has entered into solemn league by oath, saying, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He puts his promise very strongly in that passage, using many negatives in the original tongue. "I will not, not, not—never, never leave thee. I will not, not forsake thee": many times over negativing the idea that he could possibly forsake one of his own.

Brethren, let us consider whether you and I may not have given utterance to words of unbelief. If we have, let us eat up those words to-night; let us call them back and drown them in our tears. Those cruel charges were none of them true. They were spoken in haste; they were the offspring of petulance and folly. Lord, have mercy upon thy servants, and cast these grievous words of ours behind thy back. Let them be as though they were never spoken, for we never had any reason so to speak, and what we have said we do thoroughly repent of, and pray that thou wouldst blot it out for evermore.

II. So much, then, upon the first head—an utterance of unbelief: we are now ready to look within the sorrowing heart, and mark the signs that grace is still living there. We have not far to search; for, secondly, in the text there is mentioned **AN EFFORT OF STRUGGLING FAITH.**

Though David said, "I am cut off from before thine eyes," yet *he prayed, and prayed distinctly to God.* He says, "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee." O child of God, cry to a smiting God. Cry to God even when he seems to cast thee off; for where else canst thou go? What remains for thee but to cry to him, even if he shut his ear to thy plea? What if he frown upon thee? Still cling to him. Where else canst thou spy a hope? To whom, or whither could you go if you should turn from God? What if his providences seem hard? What if he use the rod upon thee till thy whole head is sick and thy whole heart faint? What if he even appears to put his hand to his scabbard to draw out the sword to slay thee? Even then there remains no resort for thee so hopeful as believing prayer. Say thou with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Cling to him still. Sink or swim, live or die, do not doubt thy God, but still pray. What did Jonah do when the weeds were wrapped about his head and he went down to the bottoms of the mountains? He still made supplication to the Lord God of salvation, and trusted his spirit in the divine hands. He tells us, "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Wherever you may be drifted, and however desperate your case, yet still pray: still pray. If you can do nothing else—if your hands are bound as to any form of effort, still pray. Never cease from crying, though you cannot rise a note above the most pitiful wailing. When Bunyan's pilgrim went through the valley-of-the-shadow-of-death, he found that he had no weapon with which he could smite the fiends that surrounded him except the weapon of all-prayer. The adversaries were too impalpable for sword or spear, too mysterious for battle-axe or bow; but prayer could find them out and smite them to the heart. Believer, this is the most convenient and useful of all the weapons in our heavenly panoply. All-prayer will help you against man or devil. It will help you to bear up under trials that come from God and tribulations that mysteriously approach you from earth or hell. Long as you live should you pray, for while you can pray you cannot perish. You must under no pressure cease from prayer, my brother. It is your last resort. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

Please notice that *David prayed in downright earnest*, for he says, "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications," so that he offered

prayers—prayers with voices to them, and he describes them

under the term, "I cried." His was a crying prayer. Those are the very best prayers. Our eyes sometimes light upon "prayers to be said or sung": we have no wish to depreciate such compositions for others, but they are of no possible use to us who delight to tell our desires to our heavenly Father in our own broken speech. That is *the* prayer which is neither said nor sung, but *cried*: it drops from the eyes in tears, it breaks forth from the lips in moans, and from the breast in groanings that cannot be uttered. Those prayers of ours which we could not endure for any human ear to hear are among the best of prayers. A little child may begin to speak and call to its mother in words, and perhaps she will not come to it; but let it give up words and try crying, and you will see if the mother does not come. Let it cry again and again, and the mother's ear will be caught by the child's cry. There is no praying to God like the crying of a childlike spirit. A cry is not a very pleasant sound. No; but it is a very prevalent sound. A cry is not even articulate. No, but it is expressive. Crying is the language of pain; it is the eloquence of grief; it is the utterance of intense longing. When you use crying prayer, when you must have the blessing, and therefore cry for it—you shall have it. We do not always give our children what they cry for, but this is the rule of our heavenly Father, "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth." Well did Isaiah say, "He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee." The rule is invariable, and many are the cases which go to prove it. We know who said, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Even in his despair, I say, David prayed, and that praying took the form of an earnest and passionate cry.

Note well that *God heard his prayer*. We sometimes fancy that God will not hear us if any measure of unbelief is mixed with our prayers. If that were the case I am afraid that the Lord would not often hear us, for there is a measure of unbelief even in our strongest faith. It is a great mercy that even when we are lamenting, "I am cut off from before thine eyes," yet if at the same time we can pray, our petition is accepted of the Lord. The Scripture saith, "According to your faith be it unto you." Suppose that text had run like this, "According to your unbelief be it unto you." Ah, me, where would you and I have been? Our unbelief would have involved us in the curse and condemnation which rest upon all who believe not in the Lord Jesus. Unbelief would sour and spoil all. God did not deal with David according to his unbelief, but he dealt with him according to his faith. We are a sorrowful mixture of natures, and if we were reckoned with according to our ill side who among us could stand? David's faith was small, but still it was true. It was an infant faith that could cry, a struggling faith that could plead, a patient faith that could wait, and so it was an accepted faith which obtained favour of the Lord. It was a faith which, if it had not an arm to fight with, had a voice to cry with, and therefore it prevailed with God.

My friend, thou who art in trouble, whoever thou mayest be, let me urge, persuade, entreat thee, not to listen to the voice of Satan who tempts thee to cease from prayer. Do not say, "God will not hear me because I am in this wretched condition." Remember the words, "Out

of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord." Cry to him wherever you may be, or whoever you may be. However desperate your plight, you shall survive it if you pray; however dire your danger, a way of escape shall be made for you if you cry unto the Lord. Cannons have been styled "the last arguments of kings"; but I may better call prayers the last arguments of needy sinners. Cling to the mercy-seat when you can cling nowhere else. Cling to the mercy-seat when justice lifts her sword to slay thee. Increase your earnestness in proportion as you are tempted to cease from prayer; and may God the Holy Ghost, who is the God of grace and of supplications, intensify your desires, help your infirmities, and teach you how to pray, and what to pray for, as you ought.

III. Our text next supplies us with A TESTIMONY OF GRATITUDE. The Psalmist says, "Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications."

Notice, that God acted in directly the opposite manner from that in which the Psalmist's unbelief acted; for, first, his unbelief spoke and said this and that; but *God did not speak*. He was a listener; "Thou heardest." Not a word came from God: there had been too many words in the business already. When we begin to grumble with anybody it takes two to make a quarrel, and if number two answers to our murmuring we soon stir up a fierce quarrel. If God were as man is, if his thoughts were as our thoughts, he would say, "Murmur, do you, when I am dealing with you so kindly? Then you shall have cause for complaining. Is my little finger heavy? You shall feel my hand. Is my hand heavy? You shall know the weight of my loins." Well might God say to us, "What! find fault while you are surrounded with so many blessings! Tell me I have forsaken you! Say to me that you are cut off from before my eyes when I am dealing graciously with you all the day long! Talk to me so! Then I will do as you have said; I will take you at your word, and make your saying true." But oh, the marvellous patience of God. He says nothing. There was the strength of Christ, that "as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" in the midst of his accusers; and here is a part of the marvellous power of God—the omnipotence which restrains omnipotence, so that he is not provoked, or, being provoked, speaks not in anger, and deals not with his servants in wrath, else had we long ago been consumed. Oh, how sweet to look back and think, He did not answer me according to my folly, or walk frowardly with me because I walked frowardly with him. His word says, "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward"; but he did not fulfil that threat to me, nor walk contrary to me though I walked contrary to him. In gentleness and patience he regarded not my evil words, and answered me not according to my folly.

You see then the difference between the quiet of God and the clamour of our unbelief. David bears cheerful testimony to the fact that he was in error when he spoke so hastily, and that God was exceeding gracious in taking so little notice of his foolish complaint.

The next contrast is seen in the fact that though David spoke in a hurry, *there was no haste in God*. "I said in my haste." Yes, but God did not reply in haste. Notice the glorious leisure of infinite love, for it is written, "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications."

God was quietly hearing while his petulant servant was fiercely complaining. We had a meeting of ministers a short time ago, at which it was agreed that for five minutes each one should relate a piece of experience. One of the brethren gave us this thought, which I shall not soon forget. He said, "It is a great thing for a minister who visits his people to be a good listener. The afflicted value this faculty above gold. Perhaps the pastor calls upon a poor woman who is in great trouble, and he sits down, and she tells him her mournful tale. Bless her heart! He has heard that tale a dozen times before, but he sits quite still and takes it all in, listening most earnestly. He has not perhaps the power to help her at all, but she feels very thankful to him because he has heard her case, and it has comforted her to tell it." It is a great thing to be willing to sit and listen, and hear a story which perhaps is very badly told, and is not at all pleasant to hear, which even creates sorrow in your own mind as you hearken to it. Such hearing displays tender sympathy. Hence the Scriptures say of God, "O thou that hearest prayer." Mark, it is not "answerest," but "hearest." Those brethren who want to be exceedingly correct tell us "God is the hearer and answerer of prayer." Yes, that is very proper; but the Scripture is content to write, "O thou that hearest prayer." It is a wonderful thing that God should sit down, as it were, and listen to the prayers of his people and put up with their nonsense—their complaining and their crying. David does not cease to wonder that in his unhappy condition he had yet been regarded of the Lord: "Thou hearest the voice of my supplication." How beautiful that is! "I spoke in haste." Ah, I poured out my bitter plaint; and all the Lord did was he *heard it*—quietly, patiently, listened to it all; took it all in, considered the case of his poor servant, knew what his fevered brain meant, and how far that evil haste arose out of it, and therefore forgave the sad unbelief which spoke out so audaciously in words of repining. Oh, it is beautiful, that gentleness of God which led him to give no answer to the hurried, passionate speech of David, but just to hear it and no more. Well did David say in another place, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

It is delightful to see how the Lord notes always the good and ignores the evil when dealing with his saints. In David's case he would not hear the foolish and false charges of his unbelief, but he heard the cries of his struggling faith. Remember the instance of Sarah: she doubted as to her bringing forth a child when she was old, and asked, "How shall it be, my lord being old also?" The Holy Spirit says nothing in the New Testament about Sarah's unbelieving speech, except that he commends that one good word in it, and notes that she "obeyed her husband, calling him lord." If the Lord can spy a beauty in his people, he fixes his eyes on it; and as for all their defilements, he washes them away, saying "they shall not be remembered against them any more for ever."

Let us go a little farther in our contrast between David and his Lord. *There was no exaggeration with God.* Unbelief exaggerates, as we have shown; but God does not. On the contrary, he diminishes the evil of his servants till it comes to nothing, putting it all away. He heard the feeble cry of faith in David's heart, and did not allow the voice of his unbelief to drown it; he did not look upon his servant's

fault till it hid his grace; but he smiled upon the work of grace, like as it was.

And though, as we have said, unbelief dishonoured God, yet *God did not dishonour his servant's prayer* for all that. No; he might have said to David's prayer, "Go thy way, I will not hear thee. Doth the same fountain send forth sweet water and bitter? I heard David say just now, 'I am cut off from before thine eyes.' Am I going to hear out of the same mouth a charge against my faithfulness and a cry for help? If he thinks I have forsaken him, let it be so." But not so of God. He will not dishonour prayer, even though prayer be very feeble and though there be an unbelief in it which is grievous in his sight. It never shall be said that faith and prayer came back from the throne of God with blushing faces: he will maintain his memorial untouched, as the motto of that memorial is—the God that heareth prayer. "Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee."

We dare not make much out of our English version by way of dogmatic teaching, and yet somehow I feel inclined to pull each little word of the text in pieces just for a minute. Look at it. "Nevertheless thou heardest the voice." "*Never-the-less,*" as much as to say, "Though I had spoken as I ought not to do, yet thou didst not lessen thine attention to me, but thou didst just as much hear my prayer as if I had never sinned with my tongue. Not one jot the less was thy pity or thy bounty: thine ear did not in any measure lose its readiness to hear my prayer, nor thy heart its willingness to feel for me. Not one particle the less for all my transgressing "thou heardest the voice of my supplications." O thou gracious God, never-the-less dost thou deal out thy mercies though it seems as if ever-the-more we sin. Nevertheless dost thou love though ever the more do we err. Oh grant that ever the more we may be grateful to thee, and never, oh never, may we again grieve thee by our unbelief.

The time has come for me to wind up with **SUNDRY LESSONS IN FEW WORDS.**

The first is, let us repent heartily of every hard thought we have ever had of our God and Father. I am forced to look back upon some such sins of thought with much distress of mind. They have come fresh upon me in serious pain and depression of spirit; and now I pray the Lord of his great mercy to look at them as though I had never thought them for I do heartily abhor them, and I loathe myself in his sight that should ever have questioned his tender love and gracious care. If you have similarly transgressed, dear friends, in your dark nights of trouble, come now, and bow your heads, and pray the Lord to forgive his servants concerning this thing; for he is so good, so gracious, that it is a wanton cruelty to think of him as otherwise than overflowing with love. There is none like unto him among the sons of men; the kindness of mortals have not his bowels of compassion. There is none like unto thee, Jehovah, even among the gods,—no fabled deity, however painted in glowing colours, can be compared unto thee! Let us take back our words if at any time we have said aught against him, and make the utmost amends by magnifying his holy name.

In the next place, let us earnestly pray that, if ever we shall be tempted again to hard, mistrustful thoughts, we may be able to put

check upon our language, and to keep our mouth as with a bridle. Oh that our tongue, which is given us to praise our God with, may never be perverted into an instrument of complaint against our greatest benefactor. O thou vile tongue, how couldst thou ever in thy hottest haste let slip an angry word against the Lord? Better far to be dumb than to dishonour a name so dear.

The next lesson is this,—let us always continue to pray, come what will. Brethren, never cease praying. What I have said before, I say again—continue in prayer. Call upon your God. Cry to him. Cry to him. While breath lasts, and life gives power to feel a desire, never cease to supplicate the Lord.

Last of all, let us always speak well of his mercy. If we have bitterly complained let us with equal vigour declare his goodness. I wish that you who are given to grumble would make up your minds that the time past will suffice you to have grumbled, and now you are going to growl backwards, to recall all your hard speeches, and to praise God as much as you have formerly complained against him. I should like farmers to break into a wonderful excitement of gratitude, so that all the nation would ring with it, and all men would confess,—“Whenever you meet a farmer, you meet with a man who is always praising God for the weather.” It will be a wonderful change if that should ever come to be the general remark. I wish you tradesmen would suddenly put a new leaf into your books, and become the most thankful set of men alive, so that it would be universally said, “Whenever we meet a tradesman, we always find him praising God for his goodness to him in his business.” For many years most traders have done the other thing, and it is time they should pitch a new tune, and sing another song. There have been “very bad times—dreadfully bad times,” quite long enough. Are there no better times coming? Bad as times are these grumblers live, and live in comfort too. Do they live on their losses? They cannot well do that, and so we may suppose that they are living on the savings of former years, and it is clear that they must have had some wonderfully good times once when we did not hear much about them. They ought to praise God now for those wonderful seasons four, five, or six years ago, when things were so marvellously good that they were able to lay up store for the years of famine. It will be a blessed thing for us when all times are good, because our minds are good and our hearts are content. May we grow like the shepherd who was asked, “Will there be good weather to-day?” and he answered that there would be good weather. “Don’t you think it will rain?” “Very likely; or perhaps it will snow.” “But you said that it would be good weather.” “Yes,” he answered, “if God sends it, it cannot be anything else than good.” “But I mean, do you think there will be such weather as pleases you.” “Ay, that there will,” said he, “for whatever pleases God pleases me.”

God give us a happy, childlike, rejoicing spirit. We have done enough murmuring to last a lifetime; let us change the tune. Suppose that you were to say, “I will make up my mind that just as much as I have ever disbelieved, mistrusted, murmured, so much will I do in the way of trusting and praising the Lord.” But suppose you were actually to do as much, that would be a poor life of which you could merely say,

"There was as much praise of God in that man's life as there was of murmuring." Shall we be content with such a summary? No, no, no, we must rise to something better than that. We must praise God a thousand times to every complaint. No; we must get above that; we must have done with all complaining. God deliver us from it, and lift us right out of unbelief; and when we do speak in our haste again may it only be to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, hallelujah!" If somebody sincerely remarks "That was a bit of enthusiasm," you may reply, "Oh yes; but as I am a hasty man, and rather quick tempered, that is the way in which I show my hastiness; I bless the Lord while my heart is hot, and then keep on doing so till I have cooled down." Lift up a hallelujah when nobody is prepared for such a word of praise. Startle your friends by crying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." The Lord lift you all up to this, and keep you there, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxxi.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."—Revelation xxi. 27.

THE text refers to the glorified church of our Lord Jesus Christ. That perfected company of the elect and sanctified is set forth in this wonderful chapter under the image of a city descending "from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Her work-day dress all laid aside, the bride appears in garments of needlework and raiment of wrought gold. The militant church, the church of the present day, is comparable to a tent, and is well imaged by the tabernacle in the wilderness: it is lit up within by the glory of God's presence, and covered without by the fiery cloudy pillar of his eternal providence; but yet to the eyes of men it is mean and inconsiderable, for verily it doth not yet appear what it shall be. By-and-by this same church, which to-day is likened unto a structure of curtains readily removed from place to place, shall become a city, fixed, permanent, high-walled, and compact together, a "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The discomforts and trials of the desert life shall be exchanged for the quiet and comfort of a city dwelling. There shall be nothing of the wilderness about the church triumphant; it shall be a right royal abode, the metropolis of the universe, the palace of the great King. Everything that is lustrous, pure, precious, majestic shall be there. Rare and priceless things which are now the peculiar treasure of kings shall be the common possession of all the sanctified. The church shall be no longer despised, but shall sit as a queen among the nations, while at her feet they shall heap up all their glory and honour. In that church there shall remain nothing for which men shall reproach her, but everything shall be manifested in her for which they shall do her honour; her very streets to be trodden on shall be of pure gold like unto transparent glass, and her lowest course of stones shall be of jasper. Everything about the perfected church shall be the best of the best: she shall be recognized as being the fairest among women, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the crown and flower of the universe. We read the sparkling

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figures of John's vision as emblems of moral and spiritual excellence, but we doubt not that, beyond the spiritual riches of the church all materialism will also be at her disposal, and the restored creation shall bring her choicest beauties to adorn the chosen bride of the Lamb.

We have said that the glorified church will be the crown of the new creation, and it is into the new heavens and the new earth that she is represented as coming down from God. He that sitteth upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." The creation which is round about us at this hour waxeth old, and is ready to vanish away. Wise men tell us that there are evident preparations in the bowels of the earth for a burning up of the earth and of all the works of men that are upon it, for its centre is an ocean of fire. God shall but speak, and as once the waters leaped upon the world and utterly destroyed all things that were upon it, so shall he call to the waves of flame and they shall rise from their hidden furnaces to melt all things with their fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The former things shall have passed away, and a new creation shall dwell beneath the new heavens, filling up the new earth; and the flower and perfection of the new creation shall be the church of the living God in her full bloom and perfectness. Even now the regenerate are a kind of first fruits of God's creatures, the fore-runners of the renewed universe; but then they shall be its centre and glory. The new birth is the beginning of the new creation: we lead the way, even we who are the church of the firstborn, but the whole creation groans to follow us so as to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

It is the glorified church, I say, that is here spoken of, and hence the text may be said to refer to heaven, for at the present moment the nucleus of the glorified church is in heaven, and from heaven every defiled thing must be shut out. Hence, too, it may refer to the kingdom of the millennial age, when the saints will reign with Christ upon the earth for a thousand years, when even upon this battle-field our conquering Leader shall be crowned with victory, and where his blood was shed his throne shall be set up, for among the sons of men shall he triumph, even among those that spat in his face. The text may also be read as including the eternal world of future bliss, for of that glorious, endless, undefiled inheritance the church glorified will be the possessor, but out of her shall long before have been gathered all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. From heaven and from all heavenly joys and states sin must be shut out. Into the perfected church there shall never enter anything that defileth, and from all its honours and rewards every polluted person is shut out by immutable decree.

I should like you for a minute or two to think of that perfected church as she is described in this chapter, for it is a description worthy of the profoundest study. What glory will surround the risen saints in their capacity as the city of God: "having the glory of God," saith the eleventh verse. What a glory of glories is this! Even now, my brethren and sisters, you that are in Christ possess the grace of God, but you shall by-and-by conspicuously shine with the glory of God. At present you share in the dishonour which falls to the lot of your Master and his church among a wicked generation, but then you shall share in the glory

which is the reward of the travail of his soul. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." How glorious will that church be whose light shall be the presence of God himself,—light in which the nations of them that are saved shall rejoice. O my God, write my name among them! And to that end write me among thy persecuted saints below. Well may we be content to endure what little of shame shall come upon the church militant on earth if we may participate in the honour of the church glorified above, for this is a glory which excelleth, "having the glory of God."

The city is described as exhibiting great massiveness, for the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. It is a solid square, perfect and compact:

"Thy walls are made of precious stones,
Thy bulwarks diamond square."

What a church will the church of God be in those happier days! Now she is as a rolling thing, removed as readily as a shepherd's tent; but then she shall stand firm as a cube which rests upon its base. We watch the church of God sometimes with trepidation and alarm, for though we know that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, yet her feebleness makes the timid tremble; but in her state after the resurrection there shall remain no signs of feebleness, for that which was sown in weakness shall be raised in power. She shall be a city the like of which hath never been beheld, whose foundation shall be deeper than the depths beneath, and her towers shall reach above the clouds. No institution shall exist so long or flourish so abundantly as the church of the living God. When you think of the massiveness of the church of God, settled in her place by the Almighty himself who hath established her, remember at the same time her vastness, for a multitude that no man can number shall be comprehended among her inhabitants: her census shall prove her citizens to be as the stars of heaven for multitude. Her stones shall not lie cast about as a little heap, but from her vast foundation the living stones shall rise course upon course, twelve foundations of jewels, till "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be exalted above the hills." I say again, write my name down among the dwellers in the great city! What higher honour can I crave than to have it said, "this man was born there"? To be numbered with princes, to be named with emperors, what of it! Your golden fleece, and silken garter, and gilded star are all poor toys; true glory lies in being part and parcel of the church, to-day despised and rejected of men, which shall ere long look forth fair as the sun, and astonish the world with the brightness of her rising. Ambition's self needs ask no more than citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem.

The perfection of the church is set forth in her being foursquare, her value in the sight of God by her walls being composed of the rarest gems, and her delights in the variety of the sparkling jewels which bedeck her, there being scarcely one precious stone omitted of those that were known to Orientals, while some are mentioned which are scarcely known to us at all. All manner of joys and treasures and pleasures and delights, every form and shade of excellence, virtue, and bliss shall belong to the perfected ones when their number and

character shall be complete, and they shall be comparable to the city of God.

The safety and quiet of the church is set forth by her gates for ever open. In times of war the city gates are fast closed, but for the New Jerusalem there will remain no fear of foe, no need to set a watch against an invader. Gog and Magog will be slain, and Armageddon's battle fought and finished, and unbroken rest shall be the portion of the glorified. Write my name among them, O my God, and permit me to enter into thy rest.

Best of all, remark how holy will the church be. She shall have no temple within her walls, for this simple reason, that she shall be all temple; she shall have no spot reserved for sacred uses, because all shall be "holiness unto the Lord." The divine presence shall be in all and over all, and this shall be the joy of her joy, "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Brethren, the glory of the church even here below is the presence of God in her midst, but what will that presence be when it shineth forth in noonday brightness? when spirits strengthened for the vision shall endure with transport the full splendour of Jehovah's throne? Tongue cannot tell the glory, for thought cannot conceive it. Write my name among the blessed who shall see Jehovah's face. O thou living God, my soul thirsteth after thee. To dwell in thy presence is the summit of the soul's delight; to be with thee where thou art, and to behold thy glory, is the heaven of heaven. To what beyond this can thoughts aspire?

I. It being declared that the glorified church is to be all this, and a great deal more, of which we cannot now speak particularly, we may well long to enter within her gates of pearl. But what saith the text? I beseech you listen attentively to the solemn sound of THE WORD OF EXCLUSION—"There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Listen, I say, to this word of exclusion, though it sounds like a death-knell in my ears. Learn that it can be abundantly justified to the conscience of all thoughtful men; learn that your own soul, if it be honest, must set its seal to the sentence of exclusion. This is no arbitrary decree, it is a solemn declaration to which all holy spirits give their willing assent and consent; an ordinance of which even the excluded themselves shall admit the justice.

For, first, *it is not meet that so royal and divine a corporation as the glorified church of God should be ruined by defilement.* God forbid that "her light, which is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal," should ever be dimmed by the breath of sin. How beautiful was this fair world in the early morning of her creation, when the dew of her youth glistened upon her, and the sunlight of God made her face to shine. Keep watch and ward, ye shining ones, that this beauty be not marred! Let watchers and holy ones fly round the new-made world to drive far hence the apostate spirit and his fellows who kept not their first estate. Sad was the hour when with dragon wing the fallen spirit descended into Eden, advanced to mother Eve, and whispered in her ear the fell temptation. Oh, ye seraphs, would God your fiery swords had kept out the arch-deceiver, that this world might have fallen, that we might have dwelt here amidst sunny glades,

by pure rivers rippling o'er sands of gold, a holy and happy race, making every hill and vale vocal with the praise of God. Now, O earth, thou art a field of blood, but thou mightest have been a garden of delights; now art thou one vast cemetery, where all the dust was once a part of the living fabric of mortal men; but thou mightest have been as the firmament filled with stars, all shining to their Creator's praise. Alas that Eden should now remain only as a name,—gone as a vision of the night! Inasmuch as we could heartily wish that evil had never entered into the primeval world, we earnestly deprecate the idea that it should ever defile the new. Shall those new heavens ever look down with amazement upon the flight of a rebellious spirit, flying, beneath their serene azure, on an errand of destruction? Shall the jewelled walls of the thrice holy city be over-leaped by an enemy of the king who is there enthroned? Shall the serpent leave his horrid trail upon the heavenly Eden, twice made of the Lord? God forbid! The purity of a world twice made, the perfection of the church of the regenerate, the majesty of the presence of God, all demand that every sinful thing should be excluded. All heaven and heavenly things cry, "Write the decree and make it sure, there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Grave it as in eternal brass, and let omnipotence go with the decree to execute it with the utmost rigour, for it would be horrible indeed if a second time evil should destroy the work of God. Into the church of the first-born above the breath of iniquity must not enter. It cannot be that the work which cost the Redeemer's blood should yet be defiled. The eternal purpose of the Father, and the love of the Spirit, forbid that the Lord's own perfected church should be invaded by any unholy thing.

Brethren, there can be no entrance of evil into the kingdom of God, for *it is the very essence of the bliss of the glorified church that evil should be excluded*. Imagine for a moment that the decree of our text were reversed or suspended, and that it were allowed that a few unregenerate men and women should enter into the glorified church of God. Suppose, in addition, that those few should be of the gentler sort of sinners, not those who would profanely blaspheme the name of God, nor openly break the eternal Sabbath, but a few who are indifferent to God's glory, and cold and formal in his praise. How could heaven bear with these? These who are neither cold nor hot are sickening both to Christ and to his people, and must they endure the nausea of their society? Why, as in a living body the existence of a dead piece of bone breeds fret, and pain, and disease, so would the presence of these few defiling ones cause I know not what of disquietude and sorrow. It must not be. Love to the saints demands that they be no more vexed by sin or sinners. Pity, mercy, yea, even the partiality of kindred love dare not ask that it may be. All heaven is up in arms at the supposition. Holy spirits are alarmed at the idea that they should be again tempted by the presence of evil. Fast bar the gates of pearl and never open them again, ye spirits, rather than that there should come upon that pure street of transparent gold a foot that will not walk in the ways of God's commandments, or the halls of Zion be disgraced by a single spirit that shall refuse to love the holy and exalted name. Heaven were not heaven if it were possible for evil of any sort to enter there. Therefore, stand firm, O dread decree,

... and a ready to saints and destruction to heaven that t
 ... it may be enter into it anything that defileth.
 ... be me beg you to consider that there is an impossib
 ... renewed person ever entering into the body
 ... church of God—an impossibility within the per
 ... back, good sirs, the reason why wicked men cannot
 ... because God will not let rebellion and peace d
 ... but because they will not let themselves be happy. The
 ... because it is the sea, and the sinner cannot be quiet bec
 ... How could you, O natural, unregenerate man, c
 ... kingdom of heaven as you are? You are not capabl
 ... possible to you. Holiness has in it no attractions for
 ... sin and the wages of it. You do not know God, and c
 ... for this is the privilege of the pure in heart, and of th
 ... You live in a world where everything has been made by
 ... great Lord, and yet you do not perceive his hand, so great is your bli
 ... Shall blind men grope through the streets of the New Jerusale
 ... You are unacquainted with the simplest elements of spiritual thin
 ... they can only be spiritually discerned, and you have no spirit
 ... You are blind and deaf, yea, dead to God and heavenly things
 ... you know you are. Well, then, of what avail would it be that
 ... should enter the spiritual realm, supposing it to be a place? for if
 ... were admitted into the place called heaven, you would not be a part
 ... of the state of heaven, and it is the state of mind and character wh
 ... is, after all, the essence of the joy. To be in a heavenly place and
 ... in a heavenly condition would be worse than hell, if worse can be. W
 ... are songs to a sad heart? Such would heaven be to an unrenewed mi
 ... The element of glory would destroy rather than bless an unrenewed mi
 ... It is as though you saw before you a blazing furnace, in which ha
 ... creatures disported themselves among the flames, bathing themselves in
 ... white heat, leaping in rapture amid the rising sparks; for they are child
 ... of the flame, who drink in fire, and find it life. Imagine yourself to
 ... a poor fly such as you hear buzzing on the window-pane; and you
 ... to enter into the glow of the furnace, thinking to be as merry as
 ... fire-children. Keep back. Why tempt your doom? You will die s
 ... enough; why ask to perish more quickly? No place would be
 ... dreadful to a sinner as the place where God is most openly manif
 ... That holy element, which is the habitat of the new-born soul, wo
 ... be the grave, the everlasting prison-house of an unholy soul could
 ... enter there. To the wicked the day of the Lord is darkness, and
 ... light, and the glory of the Lord is terror, and not bliss. Oh, unconv
 ... hearer, they sing in heaven; but in their songs your ear would find
 ... delight. They worship God in heaven; but as divine worship is irks
 ... to you, even if it be kept up for an hour or so below, what wou
 ... be to dwell for ever and ever in the world to come in the midst
 ... hallelujahs? O soul defiled with sin, you are incapable of heav
 ... The Roman Emperor Caligula, in his madness, made his horse fi
 ... consul of Rome; but his horse could not be a magistrate; it could
 ... judge or govern, whatever the emperor might decree; though he fe
 ... up golden oats from an ivory manger, it was a horse and nothing m
 ... a man be unregenerate, and unbelieving, we may do what

will with him, but he cannot rise to spiritual joys, and if we could even bid him come into heaven, still he would remain what he was, incapable of the joy and bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. So standeth it a fact in the very essence and nature of things, that there shall in no wise enter into the realm of the spiritual, the kingdom of the true, the land of the blessed, the home of the perfected, anything that defileth. It cannot come there from incapacity within itself.

Let me add that *our own hearts forbid that evil should so enter*. As I mused on this text I supposed myself to be defiled with sin, yet standing outside the pearl gates of heaven. Then I said within myself, "If I might enter there defiled as I am, would I do so?" and my heart answered, "No, I would not if I might. How could I blot such brightness and spoil such happiness?" Suppose myself infected to-day with a deadly fever—an incurable typhus, which would bring death to all that touched me. The blast is pitiless, and the snow is falling, and I stand shivering at the door of one of your houses longing for shelter. I see inside the room your little children, sporting in full health: shall I venture among them? I long to escape from the cold without; but if I should enter your room I should bring to you fever, and death to your innocent little ones and to yourselves, and thus turn your happiness into misery. I would turn away and brave the storm, and sooner die than bring such desolation into a friend's abode. And well might any honest spirit say at sight of the perfect family above, "Nay, if I might, I would not be admitted into a perfect heaven while yet I might defile it, and spread the fell contagion of moral evil." You know, brethren, how a few rags from the East have sometimes carried a plague into a city; and if you were standing at the quay when a plague-laden ship arrived you would cry, "Burn those rags; do anything with them, but do keep them away from the people. Bring not the pest into a vast city, where it may slay its thousands!" So do we cry, "Great God, forbid it that anything that defileth should enter into thy perfected church! We cannot endure the thought thereof." Draw your swords, ye angels; stand in your serried ranks, ye seraphim, and smite every defiled one that would force a passage within the gates of pearl. It must be so: "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth."

The fiat of God has gone forth, and the fiery sword is set at the gate of the new Eden. Into the first paradise there came the serpent; into the second never shall the subtle tempter enter. Into the first paradise there came sin, and God was driven from it as well as man; but into the second there shall never come anything that approximates to sin or falsehood; but the Lord God shall dwell there for ever, and his people shall dwell there with him. Thus much, then, upon the word of exclusion.

II. I desire, as I continue this meditation, in the power of the Holy Spirit, not so much to preach as to think inwardly, and ask you to think with me, of THAT WORD OF EXCLUSION WORKING WITHIN THE SOUL,—within my soul, within yours. It sits in judgment upon me, and it chastens me. It strikes home to my conscience, and rouses me to self-examination. Its voice is solemn, and strikes heavily upon the ear, as we remember its wide sweep and comprehensive breadth—"There shall in no wise enter into it *anything* that defileth." No person

who defiles, no fallen spirit, or sinful man can enter. And as no person, so no tendency, leaning, inclination, or will to sin can gain admission. No wish, no desire, no hunger towards that which is unclean shall ever be found in the perfect city of God. Nor even a thought of evil can be conceived there, much less a sinful act performed. Nothing shall ever be done within those gates of pearl contrary to the perfect law, nor anything imagined in opposition to spotless holiness. Consider such purity, and wonder at it: the term "anything that defileth" includes even an idea, a memory, a thought of evil. Thoughts that flit through the mind as birds through the air that never roost or build a nest—even such shall never glance across the skies of the new creation. It is altogether perfect! And, mark well, that no untruth can enter—"neither whatsoever maketh a lie." Nothing can enter heaven which is not real; nothing erroneous, mistaken, conceited, hollow, professional, pretentious, unsubstantial, can be smuggled through the gates. Only truth can dwell with the God of truth. These are sweeping and searching words,—no evil, nothing that works to evil; no falsehood, nothing that works to falsehood, can ever enter into the triumphant church of God. O my soul, my soul, how bears this upon thee? Cuts it not to the very quick? For how art thou to enter, defiled as thou art, and so diseased with falsehood of one sort or another?

Well may we be aroused when we remember what defiled and defiling creatures we have been in the days of our unregeneracy. Brethren, let us not shrink from the humbling contemplation. Come down from your high places and see the horrible pit in which you lie by nature. Think of your past lives, I pray you, of those days in which ye found pleasure in walking after the flesh. I call on you to remember the sins of your youth, and your former transgressions, of thought, word, and deed. If they are shut out who defile, and are defiled, where are you? where are you? For these sins of ours, though they were committed years ago, are none the less sinful to day; they are as fresh to God as if we perpetrated them this very moment. Thou art still red-handed, O sinful man, though thy crime was worked some twenty years ago. Thou art black, O sinner, still, though it be fifty years ago that thy chief sin was committed; for time has no bleaching power upon a crimson sin. The guilt of an old offence is as fresh as though it were wrought but yester-morn. Our sins in themselves make us unclean and unfit for holy company, and, alas, they are many. Our sins have left a second defilement on us, by creating the tendency to do the like again. Is there one among us that has sinned who does not know that he is all the more likely to sin again? Since after once being drawn aside by sin there are stronger draggings in the same way, sin once committed becomes a fountain of defilement. The stream in which the fish has sported will be sought by it again in its season, and the swallow will return to its old nest; even so will the mind return to its folly. Ay, so it is; and if everything that defileth is shut out from the holy city, my God, my God, am not I shut out too?

Bethink you that not only does actual sin shut men out of heaven, but this text goes to the heart by reminding us that we have within us inbred sin, which would defile us speedily, even if we were now clean of positive transgression. The fount from which actual sin comes is

within every unrenewed bosom. How can you and I enter heaven while there is unholy anger in us? The best of men are too apt to retain an unhallowed quickness of temper, which under certain circumstances worketh wrath. There shall in no wise enter into heaven a hasty temper, or a quick imperious spirit, or a malicious mind; for these defile. In certain persons there is no quickness of spirit, but there is a cold, chill obstinacy; so that having once resolved, though the resolve be evil, they stand to it doggedly and cannot be moved. Like obstinate mules, they can scarcely be driven; blows cannot stir them from their purpose. Disobedient obstinacy cannot enter the kingdom: my hearers, are you under its dominion? And, oh, there is in all of us a lusting after evil of some sort or other. Only place us in certain conditions, and the flesh longs after forbidden things, and though we chide ourselves and check the longing, yet is there not within us a relish for the sweet stolen morsels of transgression? We could weep our eyes out when we discover what a palate for pleasurable sin our old nature still retains; yea, a longing for the very sin of which we most bitterly repent and from which we most eagerly long to be delivered. How can we hope to enter heaven if there be these appetites in us? They are there, and they defile! What can we do? There, too, is that vile thing called "pride." Why, some of us cannot be trusted with a pennyworth of success, but we are exalted above measure. Some of God's children cannot have ten minutes' fellowship with Christ but they must needs put on their fine feathers and crow right lustily because they feel themselves to be nearing absolute perfection. Alas for the pride of our hearts, and the pollution which comes of it! How can such vain creatures be admitted among the glorified? Nor is this all; for sloth preys on many, and tempts them to shun God's service, and especially to shun the cross of Christ. Sloth is a rust which has a sadly defiling power: we gather moth and mildew from inaction. Never is a man pure who is not zealous in the service of God. We rot to corruption if we lie still; how, then, shall we be admitted within the jewelled city? Ah, look within thy heart, my brother—look steadily beneath the fair film of the surface, and mark the inward evil which it conceal. Judge not thyself alone when at thy best, occupied with thy prayers and praises and almsgivings, but look steadily into thy soul at other times, and thou shalt see a loathsome mass of evil life, a seething corruption moving within thy heart; for evil remaineth even in the regenerate; and this cannot enter heaven. Thank God, it cannot. Even though the word of exclusion staggers me, and sends me back as with a stunning blow, and makes me cry, "Thou shuttest me out, my God, by this thy decree;" yet I feel that if it be so, the decree is right, and just, and good. "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth." Amen and amen.

Now, I ask you whether this word of exclusion does not, in you who know its meaning, slay all hope of self-salvation? For, first, here are our past sins, and they defile, and make us defiling. How are we to get rid of them? How can we wash out these polluting blots? Tears! So much salt water thrown away if looked upon as a bath for sin! Good works performed! They are already due to God. How shall future discharge of debts repay the past? O, my God, if I have ever known what sin means, I have also known that it is impossible that its defiling nature

should ever be changed, or that the pollution should ever be removed by any efforts of my own. I spoke with one the other day who said that she was seeking salvation by good works. I knew that she had performed self-denying acts of charity, and I asked her whether she felt nearer to the salvation at which she aimed. I knew that I spoke to a sincere, honest person, and her reply did not surprise me. She answered sadly, "The more I do, the more I feel I ought to do, and I am no nearer to the point I am aiming at." And so it is; the more a sincere heart doth seek to serve God, the more it feels the shortcoming of its service of him; and the more a person seeks after purity by his own efforts, the further he judges himself to be from it. Our standard rises as we rise towards it; our conscience becomes tender in proportion as we obey it; and so, in the nature of things, rest of heart comes not in that manner. Ah, there remaineth not beneath heaven anything that can wash out the defilement of past sin save one only cleansing flood. O sinful man, plunge thy hands into the Atlantic and thou shalt crimson every drop of its tremendous waters, and yet the stain shall be as scarlet as before. No, no, no: it is certain that no man can enter heaven, by reason of his transgression and his sinfulness, except omnipotence shall cleanse him.

But then look at the other part of the difficulty, that is, the making of your own heart pure and clean. How shall this be done? How shall the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Have you tried to master your temper? I hope you have. Have you managed it? Your tendencies this way or that, you have striven against them, I hope, but have you mastered them? I will tell you. You thought you had. You thought you had bound the enemy with strong ropes: you tied him and you fastened him down, and you shut him up in an inner chamber, and you said, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." You felt that the champion was vanquished now, but oh how grimly did he laugh at you as the old adversary arose within you, and snapped the bonds, and hurled you to the ground; defeated when you thought that you had won the victory. I cannot overcome myself, nor overcome my sin. I will never cease from the task, God helping me, but apart from the divine Spirit the task is as impossible as to make a world.

III. It seems to me that we may most fitly come to the close of our sermon by thinking of THE WORD OF SALVATION, which just meets the difficulty raised by the sentence,—“There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” But, first, my past sin, what of that? There are many who are even now within the church of God above, and we will ask concerning them, “Who are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” We receive the reply, “These are they that have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “In the blood of the Lamb!” I feel as if I could sing those words. What joy that there should be anything that can take all my stains away,—all without exception, and make me whiter than snow. If Christ be God, if it be true that he did within that infant’s body contain the fulness of the Deity, and if, being thus God and man, he did take away my sin, and in his own body on the tree did bear it, and suffer its punishment for me, then I can understand how my transgression is forgiven and my sin is covered. Short of this my conscience cannot rest. The misty atonements of modern divines cannot calm my conscience; they

are not worth the time spent in listening to them, they are cobwebs of the fancy, altogether insufficient to sustain the strain even of the present conscience, much less of the conscience which shall be aroused by the judgment bar of God. But this truth,—Christ instead of me, God himself the offended one in the offender's place, bowing his august head to vengeance and laying his eternal majesty in the dishonour of a tomb: this is the fulness of consolation. O Lamb of God, my sacrifice, I shall enter heaven now! I shall pass the scrutiny of the infallible watchers. I shall not be afraid of the eyes of fire. I shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing—"Washed in the blood of the Lamb!" This is our first great comfort, brethren—"He that believeth in him is not condemned." He that believeth in him is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

But here is the point, there is still no entrance into the holy city so long as there are any evil tendencies within us. This is the work, this is the difficulty, and since these are to be overcome, how is the work to be done? Simple believing upon Christ brings you justification, but you want more than that; you need sanctification, the purgation of your nature, for have we not seen that until our nature itself is purged the enjoyment of heaven must be impossible? There can be no knowledge of God, no communion with God, no delight in God hereafter unless all sin is put away and our fallen nature is entirely changed. Can this be done? It can. Faith in Christ tells us of something else beside the blood. There is a Divine Person,—let us bow our heads and worship him—the Holy Ghost who proceedeth from the Father, and he it is who renews us in the spirit of our minds. When we believe in Jesus, the Spirit enters into the heart, creating within us a new life; that life struggles and contends against the old life, or rather the old death, and as it struggles it gathers strength and grows; it masters the evil, and puts its foot upon the neck of the tendency to sin. Do you feel this Spirit within you? You must be under its power or perish. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. I would not have you imagine that in death everything is to be accomplished for us mysteriously in the last solemn article; we are to look for a work of grace in life, a present work, moulding our character among men. Oh, sirs, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is not a sort of extreme unction reserved for death-beds, it is a matter for the walks of life and the activities of to-day. I do not know how much is done in the saint during the last minute of his lingering here; but this I know, that in a true believer the conquest of sin is a matter to be begun as soon as he is converted and to be carried on throughout life. If the Spirit of God dwells in us, we walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, and we mortify the corruptions and lusts of the old man. There must be now a treading under foot of lust and pride, and every evil thing, or these evils will tread us under foot for ever in the future state where character never changes. There must be now a rejection of the lie, a casting out of the false, or we shall be cast out ourselves for ever. There must be now a cry, "O Lord, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me,

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HONEY FROM A LION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3RD, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."—Romans v. 15.

THIS text affords many openings for controversy. It can be made to bristle with difficulties. For instance,—there might be a long discussion as to the manner in which the fall of Adam can justly be made to affect the condition of his posterity. When this is settled there might arise a question as to the exact way in which Adam's fault is connected with ourselves—whether by imputation of its sin, or in what other form; and then there might be further dispute as to the limit of the evil resulting from our first parents' offence, and the full meaning of the fall, original sin, natural depravity, and so forth. There would be another splendid opportunity for a great battle over the question of the extent of the redeeming work of the Lord Jesus Christ; whether it covers, as to persons, the whole area of the ruin of the Fall; whether, in fact, full atonement has been made for all mankind or only for the elect. It would be easy in this way to set up a thorn-hedge, and keep the sheep out of the pasture; or, to use another metaphor, to take up so much time in pelting each other with the stones, as to leave the fruit untasted. I have, at this time, neither the power nor the mental strength either to suggest or to remove the thorns, which are so often the amusement of unpractical minds. I can only chime in with that ancient father of the church, who contended in a wise and explicit manner. He has been speaking of the things of God and found himself at length shouting, "Hear me!" "No," said the father, "I will not hear me; but we will both be quiet." So we will not quarrel; but we will both be quiet. We will bow our ear to the text that which is the unconverted, that are brought into a state been so often shut

up in my sick chamber that when I do come forth I must be more than ever eager for fruit to the glory of God. We shall not, therefore, dive into the deeps with the hope of finding pearls, for these could not feed hungry men; but we will navigate the surface of the sea, and hope that some favouring wind will bear us to the desired haven with a freight of corn wherewith to supply the famishing. May the Holy Spirit bless the teaching of this hour to the creation and nourishment of saving faith.

I. The first observation from the text is this—**THE APPOINTED WAY OF OUR SALVATION IS BY THE FREE GIFT OF GOD.** We were ruined by the Fall, but we are saved by a free gift. The text tells us that “the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” “Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Although this doctrine is well known, and is taught in our synagogues every Sabbath day, yet this grand essential truth is often enough forgotten or ignored, so that it had need be repeated again and again. I could wish that every time the clock struck it said, “By grace are ye saved.” I could wish that there were a trumpet voice ringing out at day-break both on sea and land, over the whole round globe the words, “By grace are ye saved.” As Martin Luther said of a certain other truth so say I of this, “You so constantly forget it that I feel inclined to take the Bible and beat it about your head, that you may feel it and keep it in remembrance.” Men do not naturally love the doctrine of grace, and therefore they cast it out of their minds as much as possible. The larger portion of mankind do not believe that salvation is of grace: another part of them profess to believe it, but do not understand its meaning; and many who do understand it have never yielded to it or embraced it. Happy are they who belong to the remnant according to the election of grace, for they know right well the joyful sound, and they walk in the light of the glory of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Observe, that salvation is a free gift, that is to say, it is bestowed upon men by God *without regard to any merit, supposed or real.* Grace has to do with the guilty. Mercy in the very nature of things is not a fit gift for the righteous and deserving, but for the undeserving and sinful. When God deals out to men his gracious salvation they are regarded by him as lost and condemned, and he treats them as persons who have no claim upon him whatsoever, to whom nothing but his free favour can bring deliverance. He saves them, not because he perceives that they have done anything that is good, or have hopeful traits of character, or form resolutions to aspire to something better; but simply because he is merciful, and delights to exercise his grace, and manifest his free favour and infinite love. It is according to the nature of God to pity the miserable and forgive the guilty, “for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever.” God has a reason for saving men; but that reason does not lie in man’s merit in any degree whatever. This is clear from the fact that he often begins his work of grace upon those who can least of all be credited with goodness. It was said of our Lord, “This man receiveth sinners,” and the saying was most emphatically true. Sovereign grace selects such as Rahab the harlot, and Manasseh the persecutor, and Saul of Tarsus, the mad zealot against

Christ : such as these have been seized upon by grace, and arrested in infinite love, that in them the Lord might manifest the power and plenitude of his mercy. Salvation is a work which is begun by the pure, unpurchased, free favour of God, and in the same spirit it is carried on and perfected. Pure grace, which lays the foundation, also brings forth the topstone.

Salvation is also brought to men *irrespective of any merit which God foresees will be in man*. Foresight of the existence of grace cannot be the cause of grace. God himself does not foresee that there will be any good thing in any man, except what he foresees that he will put there. What is the reason, then, why he determines that he will put it there? That reason, so far as we are informed, is this, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." The Lord determines to display his love, and set on active work his attribute of grace, therefore doth he save men according to the good pleasure of his will. If there be salvation given to men upon the foresight of what they are yet to be, it is clear it is a matter of works and debt, and not of grace; but the Scripture is most decided that it is not of works, but of unmingled grace, for saith the apostle, "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Our text is express that salvation is "the free gift," and that it comes to us by "the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ."

I go a little further in trying to explain how salvation is a free gift, by saying that it is given *without reference to conditions which imply any desert*. But I hear one murmur, "God will not give grace to men who do not repent." I answer, God gives men grace to repent, and no man ever repents till first grace is given him by which he is led to repentance. "God will not give his grace to those who do not believe," says one. I reply, God gives grace to men by which they are moved to believe, and it is through the grace of God that they are brought into the faith of Jesus Christ. You may say, if you please, that repentance and faith are conditions of salvation, and I will not quarrel with you; but please remember that they are not conditions in the sense of deserving anything of God. They may be conditions of receiving, but they are not conditions of purchasing, for salvation is without money and without price. We are expressly told that salvation "is of faith, that it might be by grace": for faith is not to be numbered with works of the law, to which the idea of merit may be attached. Faith is far as the poles asunder from claiming anything of God by way of debt. Faith comes as a poor, undeserving thing, and simply trusts the free mercy of God. It never attempts to wear the crown, or grasp a particle of praise. The believer never can be a boaster, for boasting is excluded by the law, of faith. If a Christian should begin to boast, it would be because his believing is failing, and his evil nature is coming to the front; for faith is of all graces most self-denying; her song is always, *Non nobis Domine*, "Not unto us, but unto thy name give praise." While, therefore, the word of God assures us that except we repent we shall all likewise perish, and that if we believe not in Jesus Christ we shall die in our sins, it would have us at the same time know that there is no merit in repenting or believing, but grace reigns in God's acceptance of these

graces. We are not to regard the requirement of faith, repentance, and confession of sin as at all militating against the fulness and freeness of divine grace, since, in the first place, both repentance, faith, and true confession of sin are all gifts of grace, and, in the next place, they have no merit in themselves, being only such things as honest men should render when they know that they have erred and are promised forgiveness. To be sorry for my sin is no recompense for having sinned; and to believe God to be true is no work for which I may demand a reward; if, then, I am saved through faith, it is of the pure mercy of God, and of that alone that pardon comes to me.

Beloved, so far is God from giving salvation to men as a matter of reward and debt, and therefore bestowing it only upon the good and excellent, that *he is pleased to bestow that salvation over the head of sin and in the teeth of rebellion*. As I said before, mercy and grace are for the sinful, for none others need them; and God's grace comes to us when we are far off by wicked works. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Free grace breaks forth like a mighty flood, and sweeps in torrents over the hills of our transgressions, rising above the high alps of our presumptuous sins. Twenty cubits upward doth this sea of grace prevail till the tops of the mountains of iniquity are covered. The Lord passeth by transgression, iniquity, and sin, and remembereth not the iniquity of his people, because he delighteth in mercy. Almsgiving needs a pauper, and grace needs a sinner. There is no opportunity for forgiveness where there is no offence. If men are meritorious how can God be gracious to them? In such a case it will be enough for him to be just. When good works can put in a valid claim peace and heaven can be obtained by the rules of debt; but since it is clear that eternal life is the gift of pure favour, you need not marvel when I say that grace comes to men leaping over the mountains of their iniquities. Abounding mercy delights to blot out abounding sin, and it will never lack for opportunity to do its pleasure. There is no lack of occasions for grace in this poor fallen world, and of all the places where there is most room I know of one spot not far from here where there is a grand opportunity for infinite mercy and super-abounding grace to exercise their power. Here is the spot—it is this treacherous, guilty heart of mine. I think, my brother, you know of another spot that is very like it; and you, my sister, too, can say, "Wondrous mercy! Sure there is room for all its heights and depths to be shown in this sinful soul of mine." Ay, and it will be shown, too, if you can but look for it through Christ Jesus; for it is the delight of God's grace to flow into unlikely places: mercy is the glory of God, and he loves to bestow it on those who least deserve it.

We are saved by grace, free grace, pure grace, grace without regard to merit or to the possibility of such a thing, and *many of us have been saved by grace of the most abounding and extraordinary sort*. Some of us will be prodigies of divine love, miracles of mercy, to be wondered at throughout eternity: we shall be set up in heaven as monuments for angels to gaze at, in which they shall see a display of the amazing goodness of the Lord. *Some of us*, I said; but I suppose that in each one of the redeemed there is some particular development of grace which will make him specially remarkable, so that the whole body of us, as one

glorified church, shall be made known unto angels, and principalities, and powers, the manifold wisdom of God. Oh, what a revelation of grace and mercy will be seen when all the blood-washed race shall gather safely around the eternal throne, and sing their hallelujahs unto him that loved them and washed them from their sins in his own blood.

Note one thing more concerning this plan of salvation, that *all this grace comes to us through the one man Jesus Christ*. I sometimes hear people talking about a "one man ministry." I know what they mean, but I know also that I am saved by a one man ministry, even by one who trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with him. I was lost by a one man ministry, when father Adam fell in Eden; but I was saved by a one man ministry, when the blessed Lord Jesus Christ bore my sin in his own body on the tree. O matchless ministry of love, when the Lord from heaven came into the world and took upon himself our nature, and became in all respects human, and being found in fashion as a man, was obedient to death, even the death of the cross! It is through the one man, Christ Jesus, that all the grace of God comes streaming down to all the chosen. Mercy flows to no man save through the one appointed channel, Jesus the Son of man. Get away from Christ, and you leave the highway of God's everlasting love; pass this door, and you shall find no entrance into life. You must drink from this conduit-pipe, or you must thirst for ever, and ask in vain for a drop of water to cool your parched tongue. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." All the infinite mercy of God and love of God—and God himself is love—is concentrated in the person of the well-beloved Son of the Highest, and unto him be glory for ever. Sing unto him, ye angels! Chant his praise, ye redeemed! For by the one man Christ Jesus the whole company of the elect have been delivered from the wrath to come, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God.

Thus I have tried to set before you God's way of salvation.

II. Starting aside, as it may seem, from the current of our thoughts, but only with the view of coming back to it with a forcible argument, we next note that **IT IS CERTAIN THAT GREAT EVILS HAVE COME TO US BY THE FALL**. Paul speaks in this text of ours of the "offence," which word may be read the "Fall," which was caused by the stumbling of our father Adam. Our fall in Adam is a type of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, but the type is not able completely to set forth all the work of Christ: hence the apostle says, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." It is certain, then, that we were heavy losers by the offence of the first father and head of our race. I am not going into details and particulars, but it is clear that we have *lost the garden of Eden* and all its delights, privileges, and immunities, its communion with God, and its freedom from death. We have lost our first honour and health, and we have become the subjects of pain and weakness, suffering and death: this is the effect of the Fall. A desert now howls where otherwise a garden would have smiled. Through the sin of Adam we have been born under conditions which are far from being desirable, heirs to a *heritage of sorrow*. Our griefs have been alleviated by the bounty of God, but still we are not born under

such conditions as might have been ours had Adam remained in his integrity and kept his first estate. We came into the world with a *bias towards evil*. Those of us who have any knowledge of our own nature must confess that there is in us a strong tendency towards sin, which is mixed up with our very being. This is not derived solely from faults of education, or from the imitation of others; but there is a bent within us in the wrong direction, and this has been there from our birth. Alas! that it should be so; but so it is. In addition to having this tendency to sin, we are made *liable to death*—nay, not liable alone, but we are sure in due time to bow our heads beneath the fatal stroke. Two only of the human race have escaped death, but the rest have left their bodies here to moulder back into mother earth, and unless the Lord cometh speedily, we expect that the same thing will happen to these bodies of ours. While we live we know that the *sweat of our brow* must pay the price of our bread; we know that our children must be born with pangs and travail; we know that we ourselves must return to the dust from whence we are taken; for dust we are, and unto dust must we return. O Adam, thou didst a sad day's work for us when thou didst hearken to the voice of thy wife and eat of the forbidden tree. The world has no more a Paradise anywhere, but everywhere it has the place of wailing and the field of the dead. Where can you go and not find traces of the first transgression in the sepulchre and its mouldering bones? Every field is fattened with the dust of the departed: every wave of the sea is tainted with atoms of the dead. Scarcely blows a March wind down our streets but it sweeps aloft the dust either of Cæsar or his slave, of ancient Briton, or modern Saxon; for the globe is worm-eaten by death. Sin has scarred, and marred, and spoiled this creation by making it subject to vanity through its offence. Thus terrible evils have come to us by an act in which we had no hand: we were not in the Garden of Eden, we did not incite Adam to rebellion, and yet we have become sufferers through no deed of ours. Say what you will about it, the fact remains, and cannot be escaped from.

This sad truth leads me on to the one which is the essence of the text, and constitutes my third observation.

III. FROM THE FALL WE INFER THE MORE ABUNDANT CERTAINTY THAT SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH CHRIST JESUS SHALL COME TO BELIEVERS. If all this mischief has happened to us through the fall of Adam why should not immense blessing flow to us by the work of Christ? Through Adam's transgression we lost Paradise, that is certain; but if anything can be more certain we may with greater positiveness declare that the second Adam will restore the ruin of the first. If through the offence of one man many be dead, much more the grace of God and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, shall abound and has abounded unto many. Settle in your minds, then, that the fall of Adam has wrought us great damage, and then be as much assured that the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, in which we had no hand whatever, must do us great service. Believing in Christ Jesus, it becomes beyond all measure sure to us that we are blessed in him, seeing that it is already certain that through the fall of Adam we have become subject to sorrow and death.

For, first, *this appears to be more delightful to the heart of God.* It must be fully according to his gracious nature that salvation should come to us through his Son. I can understand that God, having so arranged it that the human race should be regarded as one, and should stand or fall before him in one man, should carry out the arrangement to its righteous end, and allow the consequences of sin to fall upon succeeding generations of men: but yet I know that he takes no pleasure in the death of any, and finds no delight in afflicting mankind. When the first Adam transgressed it was inevitable that the consequences of his transgression should descend to his posterity, and yet I can imagine a perfectly holy mind questioning whether the arrangement would be carried out. I can conceive of angels saying one to another, "Will all men die through this entrance of sin into the world? Can it be that the innumerable sons of Adam will all suffer from his disobedience?" But I cannot imagine any question being raised about the other point, namely, the result of the work of our Lord Jesus. If God has so arranged it that in the second Adam men rise and live, it seems to me most gloriously consistent with his gracious nature and infinite love that it should come to pass that all who believe in Jesus should be saved through him. I cannot imagine angels hesitating and saying, "Christ has been born; Christ has lived; Christ has died; these men have had nothing to do with that: will God save them for the sake of his Son?" Oh, no, they must have felt, as they saw the babe born at Bethlehem, as they saw him living his perfect life and dying his atoning death, "God will bless those who are in Christ; God will save Christ's people for Christ's sake." As for ourselves, we are sure that if the Lord executes judgment, which is his strange work, he will certainly carry out mercy, which is his delight. If he kept to the representative principle when it involved consequences which gave him no pleasure, we may be abundantly assured that he will keep to it now that it will involve nothing but good to those concerned in it. Here, then, is the argument,—“For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”

This assurance becomes stronger still when we think that *it seems more inevitable that men should be saved by the death of Christ than that men should be lost by the sin of Adam.* It might seem possible that, after Adam had sinned, God might have said, "Notwithstanding this covenant of works, I will not lay this burden upon the children of Adam"; but it is not possible that after the eternal Son of God has become man, and has bowed his head to death, God should say, "Yet after all I will not save men for Christ's sake." Stand and look at the Christ upon the cross, and mark those wounds of his, and you will become absolutely certain that sin can be pardoned, nay, must be pardoned to those who are in Christ Jesus. Those flowing drops of blood demand with a voice that cannot be gainsaid that iniquity should be put away. If the voice of Abel crying from the ground was prevalent, how much more the blood of the Only-begotten Son of God, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot? It cannot be, O God, that thou shouldst despise or forget the sacrifice on Calvary. Grace must flow to sinners through the bleeding

Saviour, seeing that death came to men through their transgressing progenitor.

I do not know whether I shall get into the very soul of this argument as I desire, but to me it is very sweet to look at *the difference as to the causes of the two effects*. Look now at the occasion of our ruin,—“the offence of one.” The one man transgresses, and you and I and all of us come under sin, sorrow, and death. What are we told is the fountain of these streams of woe? The one action of our first parents. Far be it from me to say a word to depreciate the greatness of their crime, or to raise a question as to the justice of its consequences. I think no one can have a more decided opinion upon that point than I have; for the offence was very great, and the principle which led to our participation in its results is a just one, and, what is more, is fraught with the most blessed after-consequences to fallen men, since it has left them a door of hope of their rising by the same method which led to their fall. Yet the sin which destroyed us was the transgression of a finite being, and cannot be compared in power with the grace of the infinite God; it was the sin of a moment, and therefore cannot be compared for force and energy with the everlasting purpose of divine love. If, then, the comparatively feeble fount of Adam's sin sends forth a flood which drowns the world in sorrow and death, what must be the boundless blessing poured forth from the infinite source of divine grace? The grace of God is like his nature, omnipotent and unlimited. God hath not a measure of love, but he is love; love to the uttermost dwells in him. God is not only gracious to this degree or to that, but he is gracious beyond measure; we read of “the exceeding riches of his grace.” He is “the God of all grace,” and his mercy is great above the heavens. Our largest conceptions fall far short of the lovingkindness and pity of God, for “his merciful kindness is great towards us.” As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts in the direction of grace. If, then, my brethren, the narrow fount which yielded bitter and poisonous waters has sufficed to slay the myriads of the human race, how much more shall the river of God which is full of water, even the river of the water of life, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, supply life and bliss to every man that believeth in Christ Jesus? Thus saith Paul, “For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” That is the argument of the text, and to me it seems to be a very powerful one, sufficient to dash out the very life of unbelief and enable every penitent man to say, “I see what I have lost in Adam, but I also see how much I obtain through Christ Jesus, my Lord, when I humbly yield myself to him.”

Furthermore, I would have you note *the difference of the channels* by which the evil and the good were severally communicated to us. In each case it was “by one,” but what a difference in the persons! We fell through Adam, a name not to be pronounced without reverence, seeing he is the chief patriarch of the race, and the children should honour the parent: let us not think too little of the head of the human family. Yet what is the first Adam as compared with the second Adam? He is but of the earth earthly, but the second man is the Lord from heaven. He was at best a

mere man, but our Redeemer counts it not robbery to be equal with God. Surely, then, if Adam with that puny hand of his could pull down the house of our humanity, and hurl this ruin on our first estate, that greater man, who is also the Son of God, can fully restore us and bring back to our race the golden age. If one man could ruin by his fault, surely an infinitely greater man in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily can restore us by the abounding grace of God.

And look, my brethren, what this man did. Adam commits *one* fault and spoils us; but Christ's works and achievements are not one, but many as the stars of heaven. Look at that life of obedience: it is like a crown set with all manner of priceless jewels: all the virtues are in it, and it is without flaw in any point. If one sinful action of our first covenant head destroys, shall not a whole life of holiness, on the part of our second covenant representative be accepted for us?

But what is more, Adam did but eat of the forbidden fruit, but our Lord Jesus died, pouring out his soul unto death, bearing the sin of his people upon himself. Such a death must have more force in it than the sad deed of Adam. Shall it not save us? Is there any comparison between the one act of rebellion in the garden and the matchless deed of superlative obedience upon the cross of Calvary which crowned a life of service? Am I sure that the act of disobedience has done me damage? Then I am much more certain that the glorious act of self-sacrifice must be able to save me, and I cast myself upon it without question or misgiving. The passion of God's Only-begotten must have in it infallible virtue for the remission of sin. Upon the perfect work of Jesus my soul hangs at this moment, without a suspicion of possible failure, and without the addition of the shadow of a confidence anywhere else. The good which may be supposed to be in man, his best words and holiest actions, are all to me as the small dust of the balance as to any title to the favour of God. My sole claim for salvation lies in that one man, the gift of God, who by his life and death has made atonement for my sin, but that one man, Christ Jesus, is a sure foundation, and a nail upon which we may hang all the weight of our eternal interests. I feel the more confidence in the certainty of salvation by Christ because of my firm persuasion of the dreadful efficacy of Adam's fall. Think awhile and it will seem strange, yet strangely true, that the hope of Paradise regained should be argued and justified by the fact of Paradise lost, that the absolute certainty that one man ruined us should give us an abounding guarantee that one glorious man has in very deed effectually saved all those who by faith accept the efficacy of his work.

Now, if you have grasped my thought, and have drunk into the truth of the text, you may derive a great deal of comfort from it, and it may suggest to you many painful things which will henceforth yield you pleasure. A babe is born into the world amid great anxiety because of its mother's pains, but while these go to prove how the consequences of the Fall are still with us, according to the word of the Lord to Eve, "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," they also assure us that the second Adam can abundantly bring us bliss through a second birth, by which we are begotten again unto a lively hope. You go into the arable field and mark the thistle, and tear your garments with a thorn: these

prove the curse, but also preach the gospel. Did not the Lord God say, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." Through no fault of ours, for we were not present when the first man offended, our fields reluctantly yield their harvests. Well, inasmuch as we have seen the thorn and the thistle produced by the ground because of one Adam, we may expect to see a blessing on the earth because of the second and greater Adam. Therefore with unbounded confidence do I believe the promise—"Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

Do you wipe the sweat from your brow as you toil for your livelihood? Did not the Lord say, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"? Ought not your labour to be an argument by which your faith shall prove that in Christ Jesus there remaineth a rest for the people of God. In toiling unto weariness you feel that Adam's fall is at work upon you; he has turned you into a tiller of the ground, or a keeper of sheep, or a worker in metals, but in any case he has made you wear a yoke; say you then to the Lord Jesus, "Blessed second Adam, as I see and feel what the first man did, I am abundantly certified as to what thou canst accomplish. I will therefore rest in thee with all my heart."

When you observe a funeral passing slowly along the street, or enter the churchyard, and notice hillock after hillock above the lowly beds of the departed, you see set forth evidently before your eyes the result of the Fall. You ask,—Who slew all these? and at what gate did the fell destroyer enter this world? Did the first Adam through his disobedience lift the latch for death? It is surely so. Therefore I believe with the greater assurance that the second Adam can give life to these dry bones, can awake all these sleepers, and raise them in newness of life. If so weak a man as Adam by one sin has brought in death, to pile the carcasses of men heaps upon heaps, and make the earth reek with corruption, much more shall the glorious Son of God at his coming call them again to life and immortality, and renew them in the image of God. How blessed are those words,—“Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” Is not this killing a lion, and finding honey in its carcase? “Out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness,” when from the fact of the Fall we derive a strong assurance of our restoration by Christ Jesus.

Time fails me; otherwise I meant to have dwelt somewhat at length upon the last head which can now only be cursorily noticed.

IV. It seems certain that if from the fall of Adam such great results

low, GREATER RESULTS MUST FLOW FROM THE GRACE OF GOD, AND THE GIFT BY GRACE, WHICH IS BY ONE MAN, JESUS CHRIST. Brethren, suppose that Adam had never sinned, and we were at this moment unfallen beings, yet our standing would have remained in jeopardy, seeing that at any moment he might have transgressed and so have pulled us down. Thousands of years of obedience might not have ended the probation, seeing there is no such stipulation in the original covenant. You and I therefore would be holding our happiness by a very precarious tenure; we could never glory in absolute security and eternal life as we now do in Christ Jesus. We have now lost everything in Adam, and so the uncertain tenure has come to an end, our lesse of Eden and its joys has altogether expired; but we that have believed, have obtained an inheritance which we hold by an indisputable and never-failing title which Satan himself cannot dispute; "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The Lord Jesus Christ has finished the work by which his people are saved, and that work has been certified by his resurrection from the dead. There are no "ifs" in the covenant now; there is not a "peradventure" in it from beginning to end; no chances of failure caused by unfinished conditions can be found in it. "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved.*" Do you say "I believe he shall be saved if he—"? Do not dare to add an "if" where God has placed none. Remember what will happen to you if you add anything to the book of God's testimony. No, it is written, "He that believeth and is baptized *shall be saved:*" "He that believeth in him hath *everlasting life.*" "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Thus we have obtained a surer standing than we could have had under the first Adam, and our hymn is true to the letter when it sings—

"He raised me from the deeps of sin,
The gates of gaping hell,
And fix'd my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell."

Our Lord has not only undone the mischief of the Fall, but he has given us more than we have lost: even as the Psalmist saith, "Then I restored that which I took not away."

By the great transgression of Adam we lost our life in him, for so ran the threatening—"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"; but in Christ Jesus we live again with a higher and nobler life, for the new life being the direct work of the Spirit, and being sustained by feeding upon the person of the Lord Jesus, is higher than the life of innocence in the garden of Eden. It is of a higher kind in many respects, of which we cannot now speak particularly, but this much we may say, "The first Adam was made a living soul, the second Adam is a quickening Spirit."

The Lord Jesus has also brought us into a nearer relationship to God than we could have possessed by any other means. We were God's creatures by creation, but now we are his sons by adoption; in a certain narrow sense we were the offspring of God, but now by the exaltation of the man Christ Jesus, the representative of us all, we are brought into the nearest possible relationship to God. Jesus sits upon the throne of God, and manhood is thus uplifted next to deity: the

nearest akin to the Eternal is a man, Christ Jesus, the Son of the Highest. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, and therefore we share his honours and participate in his triumphs. In Christ Jesus man is made to have dominion over all the works of God's hands, and the redeemed are raised up together with Christ and made to sit in the heavenly places with him, above all principalities and powers, and all things else that be; for these are the favourites of heaven, the beloved of the great King. No creatures can equal perfected men; they rise superior even to the angels who have never sinned; for in them the riches of the glory of God's grace is more fully seen than in pure, unfallen spirits.

O beloved, hath not the Lord Jesus Christ done much for us, and ought we not to expect that it should be so, for the grace of God, and the gift by grace by the man Christ Jesus, are infinitely stronger forces than Adam's sin. There must be much more sap in the man, the Branch, than in that poor plant, the one man who was made from the dust of the earth. Oh the bliss which opens up before us now. We have lost Paradise, but we shall possess that of which the earthly garden was but a lowly type: we might have eaten of the luscious fruits of Eden, but now we eat of the bread which came down from heaven; we might have heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, but now, like Enoch, we may walk with God after a nobler and closer fashion. We are now capable of a joy which unfallen spirits could not have known: the bliss of pardoned sin, the heaven of deep conscious obligation to eternal mercy. The bonds which bind redeemed ones to their God are the strongest which exist. What a joy it will be to love the Lord more than any other of his creatures, and assuredly we shall do so. Do not think that this is an unwarrantable assertion, for I feel sure that it is the truth. Do you not read in the gospels of a woman who washed the Saviour's feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, and anointed them with ointment? Did not the Saviour say that she loved much because she had much forgiven. I take it that the same general principle will apply to all places, to eternity as well as to time, and therefore I believe that forgiven sinners will have a love to God and to his Christ such as cherubim and seraphim never felt; Gabriel cannot love Jesus as a forgiven man will do. Those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb will be nearer and dearer to him, and he will be nearer and dearer to them, than all the ministering spirits before the throne, for he took upon him our nature and not theirs. Glory be unto thee, O Christ! As I look into the awful deeps of Adam's fall, I tremble, but when I lift up my eyes again to the eternal heights whither thou hast raised me by thy passion and thy resurrection I feel strengthened by the former vision. I magnify the infinite grace of God, and believe in it unstaggeringly. Oh, that I had power to magnify it with fit words and proper speech, but these are not with me. Accept the feeling of the heart when the language of the lip confesses its failure. Accept it, Lord, through the Well-beloved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans v.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 233, 229.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE COMMON SALVATION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The common salvation.”—Jude 3.

JUDE says, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you.” The apostle did not write for writing’s sake, and in this he sets us an example: we are not to speak for speaking’s sake, nor even to preach for preaching’s sake. When we take upon us to write concerning divine things it ought to be because it is needful for us to write, and when we speak in the name of God it should be because we have something to say which it is needful should be said. Unless a man feels an imperative necessity to speak he will not speak as an ambassador of God. I wot that Jude would not have given all diligence to write if he had not first felt that necessity was laid upon him so to do. Before you instruct others endeavour to feel the obligation which rests upon you to impart the light which you have received, for if you have been called of God unto this ministry woe is unto you if you preach not the gospel. The souls of others require the truth which you have been commissioned to teach; but you also require to teach it to them; for, if you do not warn them, their blood may stain your skirts. “That the soul be without knowledge is not good:” neither is it good to any that he should withhold what he knows. That men should live and die in ignorance of Christ is terrible to conceive of, therefore when you speak or write do it because it is needful to be done, and needful that you should do it. You know how it behoved Christ to suffer, and even so it behoves us to hold forth the word of life.

The necessity in the present case was that he should write of the common salvation. If it was common—commonly understood and commonly received—why should he need to write about it? Surely a common subject has enough written upon it already, and it affords no room for freshness and novelty, which are so much desired by readers. Yet experience and observation prove that it is more needful to preach the common doctrines of the gospel than any other truths, and that just those things which appear to be the most elementary and the most generally received are those upon which it is most important to lay stress

again and again. If there be certain high doctrines, speculative theories, and dogmas which are rather outgrowths of the gospel than the gospel itself, let them be preached in due proportion; but if they be not preached, the risk and danger will not be extreme. As for the root facts, the fundamental doctrines, the primary truths of Scripture, we must from day to day insist upon them. We must never say of them, "Everybody knows them"; for, alas! everybody forgets them. We must not cease from proclaiming them from fear of being charged with uttering mere platitudes; that which is revealed of the Holy Ghost must not be spoken of so reproachfully. Let men call the doctrines of the gospel platitudes if they will; we will only answer, that on such platitudes our salvation rests. After all, on certain grand, wide, well-known truths of universal acceptance the church of God is builded; her basis is not a difficult philosophy, but a plain revelation. Let us not strain after matters of ultra refinement, theories of cultured intellects; but let us obey the necessity which calls upon us to write and to speak of the common salvation. The gospel message is full of world-wide truisms and well-known facts. What said Paul,—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” If worthy of all acceptation it is surely worthy of all proclamation. It is worth while for the whole church continually to rehearse that Jesus came to save sinners, for common truth as it is there is a necessity that we should perpetually and diligently make it known. The common salvation should be commonly spoken of; but I fear it is uncommonly neglected in these days.

The immediate necessity to write of the common salvation arose out of certain men who had crept into the church unawares. Some of these attacked the gospel on its practical side with Antinomian subtlety. They cried up the grace of God, but said little of the holy living which it produces. They made light of sin under pretence of magnifying the grace of God; they called careful watchfulness a legal spirit, derided humble self-examination, and claimed as children of God to be in no sense bound by the precepts of the moral law. The apostle calls it “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.” Side by side with these there crept in another gang of evil ones, “who denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They robbed Christ of his divine glory, and so denied his atonement and sovereignty as to dethrone him from being either the Saviour or the King of his church. This was the essence of Arianism. They said that Jesus Christ was an admirable example, that he was one of a number of persons who have discovered important truths, and that he is therefore to be greatly admired; but they asserted that still higher truth would yet be discovered as the race proceeded in its progress, and so forth. These “men of thought” crept into the church, and stabbed at the heart of the common salvation. We used to have in our churches a sad amount of the Antinomian leaven; we had among us men who preached the doctrine of grace without the grace of the doctrine, and professors who for evermore spoke about “the truth,” but seemed little careful about following “the way” or exhibiting “the life.” I hope that this evil principle has pretty well departed from us, though I fear that in its removal it has dragged away precious truth with it; and now we are assailed by quite another school of thought. I see no choice in

the two kinds of foes, they are equally bad: these last are denying this truth and paring down the other, moving landmarks and overthrowing monuments, shaking every wall and kicking at every foundation. Having crept in among us unawares, defiant of common honesty, they preach against the gospel from our own pulpits and wage war against our Zion from within her own gates. It is essential at this day that such as fear God, and are his servants, should again and again both write and preach concerning "the common salvation," and over and over again rehearse the first lessons of Christ, the very alphabet of grace. We must make the joyful sound of the common salvation to be more common than ever. I wish to ring it out this morning with all the power that I have and with all that God will grant me by his Holy Spirit. If these men assailed certain speculations of theology it would little matter. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord? Let the chaff be removed, by all means. If they assailed certain peculiarities of method, either in work, or life, or teaching, it might be well for us to be taught something by their censures. If they attacked the specialities of a single person or sect, and the particular view of truth held by a mere party, it would not signify, for what are the fashions of men's minds? Who is Paul, and who is Apollos? But it is at the very root of the tree that they lay their axe, and, therefore, we must end all hesitation, take up our weapons, and for the sake of the common salvation earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Our subject, then, is "the common salvation." Oh to speak in the power of the Spirit.

I. Our first observation at this time shall be that PRESENT SALVATION IS ENJOYED BY THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST, otherwise there could be among them no "common salvation." Those who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called, are saved. In the church of God salvation is this day the privilege of all believers. *It is not a matter of the future alone*, a blessing to be sought for on a dying bed and reached in heaven; but it is a blessing for this world and this present time. Those greatly mistake the meaning of salvation who suppose it signifies nothing more than escaping from hell when you die and entering into heaven when the time has come. Salvation means being at once delivered from the power of sin, and being once for all washed from the guilt of sin. The very word used here—"the common salvation"—shows that Jude did not regard it as a hidden treasure put away from human reach throughout this mortal life. How could it have been common in such a case? He did not regard it as a distant attainment to be reached after twenty, thirty, or forty years of holy living, but as a thing to be tasted, and handled, and received as soon as faith enters the soul; for how else could it be common? "Unto us who are saved," says the apostle, "who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling," saith the Scripture in another place. Salvation has come to our house, we have it, it is a common blessing in the household of faith.

As salvation is not a future benefit only, so *it is not a benefit reserved for a few of the more saintly people among believers*. It is supposed by some that you cannot know whether you are saved till you are in the article of death; or that, if any do know it, it must be a few eminent teachers or specially holy persons, who have lived a very religious life, and consequently know that they are saved. It is to be confessed that

the more holy and godly our life the brighter our evidence of salvation becomes; but still, the blessing itself is common to all the children of God, and those whose faith is feeble, and whose spiritual life is weak, are still saved in the Lord. Beloved hearer, you ought not to rest without knowing that you are saved. You may know it: if it be true you ought to know it. I do not think that you have any right to sit quietly on that seat for ten minutes without knowing that you are saved; for it is an awful thing to be in doubt as to whether you are under the bondage of sin, in doubt as to your being at peace with God. This is not a subject upon which uncertainty can be endured. You say, "Tis a point I long to know." It is well that you long to know it: I beg you to long to know it so intensely that you must either know it or become unutterably wretched. Let every doubt on that point be like a sword in your bones. May God cause your heart either to rejoice with full assurance, or else to be in agony as with death pangs till you are confident that you are built on the sure foundation. The salvation which is in Christ Jesus is the common salvation of all who know the gospel and live upon it. Among simple-minded believers salvation is the inheritance of every one of them, and the knowledge that they are saved is an everyday possession. We who have joined in church-fellowship in this place can truly say, "We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh": "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We count it no presumption to say that we are saved, for the word of God has told us so in those places where salvation is promised to faith in Christ Jesus. The presumption would lie in doubting the word of God; but in simply believing what he says there is far greater humility than in questioning it. Being, then, partakers of like precious faith we share in salvation bought with precious blood, which though it be costly beyond all price is, nevertheless, to all believers the common salvation.

This common salvation consists in many works of grace for us and in us. In part it consists of deliverance from spiritual death. We were dead in trespasses and sins, but the Spirit of God has quickened us into a new and heavenly life, and thus we have salvation from spiritual death. This belongs to-day to all believers; for how can a man be a believer and not have the inner life? Having that life he is conscious that it is there. True, he may fall into a fainting fit, and lie swooning, scarcely conscious of being alive; but such is not his usual condition. Healthy life is conscious life, and rejoices in being, acting, and growing. You who are strangers to the people of God may think me fanatical, but, indeed, I am only speaking words of truth and soberness when I say that the conscious possession of a heavenly life is common among believers, and is, in fact, a large part of the common salvation.

This common salvation consists in deliverance from that awful distance at which we once stood from God. We were far off from him by wicked works, and when the quickening began in us we felt that distance, and we mourned it, fearing also that it never could be removed. But now in Christ Jesus we are brought nigh, and have become dwellers in the house of the Lord. Abba, Father, is the cry which the blessed God hears and accepts, as it rises from our hearts. Once God was not in all our thoughts, but now our thoughts are sanctified, and sweetened

by a sense of his presence ; and we find our greatest joy in feeling that he is all around us and within us, that in him we live and move and have our being. Blessed is the common salvation which has brought us nigh to God by the blood of Jesus, and made us children and heirs of the Most High.

We have also been saved from the gloom of heart which once hung over us, because we were conscious of being under God's displeasure. We thought that we could never be forgiven, but we are forgiven ; we concluded that our heavenly Father would never accept us, but we are accepted in the Beloved ; we wrote ourselves down among the condemned, but now are we justified by faith which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The darkness hath passed, and the true light shines into the spirits of the faithful. Peace with God is a sweet part of the common salvation.

Now are we delivered also from the love of sin. We cannot find pleasure in it as once we did. We sin, but it costs us dear. When we do so we lament it with our whole soul. It was our natural way to run the downward road, but now when our feet tread that path it is as wanderers who are out of their way. Once sin was our element, as the water is the living element of fish ; but it is far otherwise now, for sin is death to us. Transgression now breeds sorrow in our conscience, and creates misery in the heart, for it is alien to the life of God which is in us. If we could have our desire we would never offend again : we would have our souls clear as the firmament above us, and never should an evil thought or a loose desire flit over the pure heavens of our sanctified minds. We would do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven ; I say "we," for I speak for all believers in the Lord Jesus. We are all rescued from the iron yoke of the love of evil, and this is a most precious part of the common salvation.

The Lord has also delivered us from that cowardly fear of man which bringeth a snare, and holdeth men as slaves to evil customs. He has also brought us out of the dark dungeon of spiritual ignorance, and renewed us in knowledge ; thus has he broken the dominion of the former lusts of our ignorance, and given us liberty to serve him with godly fear. Pride, too, is laid in the dust, and we are saved from that dreadful tyrant. The dominant power of selfishness is destroyed, and we have learned to love. The woes of others afflict us, the joys of others rejoice us, our soul flows out beyond the narrow confines of our own ribs. Our heart is enlarged with love towards God and to all his creatures. Blessed salvation this ! And it is common to all believers.

We have again and again heard it said that evangelical ministers preach salvation to sinful men and talk to them of a future life, whereas if we were practical we should denounce the sinner, and speak only of present reformation in this life. The charge is, I fear, oftener made in malice than in ignorance. But if in ignorance I would reply,—O fools and slow of heart, neither to hearken nor to understand. Our constant theme is immediate salvation from sin, and we are perpetually insisting upon it that this salvation is a present business, to be attended to at once for the purposes of to-day. It is false, utterly false, that we have so preached about the world to come as to have pushed out of sight the duties and temptations of this present life. No, we have regarded the

life to come as commenced here below, and have viewed heaven itself as to a great extent the fruit of a heavenly disposition which must be implanted in us while yet on earth. Ah, if men did not hate the gospel they would not so often repeat stale objections and groundless accusations. It is surely time that infidelity should invent something fresh in the way of objection, for this has long passed the stage of toleration, and has become a worn-out impertinence.

Salvation from sin, leading upward to perfection and heaven, is called in the text "the common salvation." It is, then, the salvation of all God's people—the salvation about which all true Christians are agreed; for, notwithstanding all you hear about our divisions into sects, the church is really one. The denominations of the Christian church are very like the divisions of a ploughed field by means of furrows which mark the surface, but the land remains to all intents and purposes one field. I speak not of mere professors, but truly spiritual people; such are all one in Christ Jesus, and their salvation is in all respects the same. If they have not all things common, at least they have one and the same salvation. All converted men and women believe in the same essential truths, feel the working of the same Spirit within them, and press forward to the same end, namely, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. You shall take a high churchman, who is a truly spiritual man, and there are such people, and you shall set him down side by side with the most rigid member of the Society of Friends, and when they begin to talk of Jesus, of the work of the Holy Spirit in the soul, and the desire of their hearts after God, you will hardly know which is which. The nearer we come to him who is the salvation of God, the more plainly we see that among the children of God the basis of agreement is far wider than the ground of division. Andrew Fuller well and pithily said, "There are, I conceive, four things which essentially belong to the common salvation; its necessity, its vicarious medium, its freeness to the chief of sinners, and its holy efficacy." We may differ on the "five points," but we are agreed upon these four points. Ask any true Christian if it be not so. You shall get together, if you like, a collection of the odds and ends of Christianity—and certainly there are some queer Christian people about, whose light comes from above, so they say,—I think through a crack in the roof; but if they are really genuine, and their hearts are right, you shall find that even in these wrong-headed folk there is an agreement upon their need of a Saviour, their faith in his death, the freeness of his grace, and the change of heart which it produces. All believers in Christ have a common delight in a common salvation.

II. We go a step further, and note, secondly, that THIS SALVATION IS IN SOME RESPECTS COMMON IN THE WIDEST POSSIBLE SENSE. It is common because *it is to be preached to all nations*, to all classes, to all characters, to all ages, and to all conditions of men—in fact, it is to be preached to every creature under heaven. It is the common salvation so far as this, that a proclamation of mercy through Jesus Christ is to be made to all mankind; for it is declared that if they believe in Christ Jesus they shall be saved. You need not be afraid of being too free and unreserved in your delivering of the gospel. Let the great trumpet be blown, and let every mortal ear attend. I am as firm an adherent

to the doctrines of sovereign grace as any man living; but never shall this tongue hesitate to declare the common salvation. Whenever I am called upon to address a congregation, I will always cry, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The invitation of the gospel is so far-reaching that it may well be called "the common salvation."

It is common in the widest sense, because *every man that believeth in Christ Jesus will be saved*; not the Jew only, but the Gentile also; not the poor man only, but the rich man also; not the black man only, or the white man only, but men of every colour; not the ignorant or the learned, the rude or the refined, exclusively, but every soul of Adam born that believeth in Christ Jesus shall be saved. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And so to thee, dear hearer, whoever thou mayest be, comes this common salvation. It is a command addressed to thee, and a promise made sure to thee: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

It is common in this wide sense, that *if any man be saved he will be saved by this common salvation*. Men talk as if there were half-a-dozen different roads to heaven, and yet there is but one: they prattle as if there were seven or eight Saviours at the least, or as if every man must be his own Saviour, as we heard the other day of every man being his own lawyer; and yet there is but one name given among men whereby we must be saved. He who tries to be his own Saviour has a fool for his client. He will utterly fail to his eternal confusion: why did Jesus die to save us if we can save ourselves? All of Adam born who enter eternal life come in by the one door. Infants are saved through Christ, and if any attain to heaven from among the heathen it must be by virtue of the salvation of Christ. He is the common life for all that live, the common bread for all who are fed by God, the common joy of all who have been blessed of the Lord. Thus in its publication, in its promise, and in its efficacy the salvation of Christ is the one and only gospel of life to men. As there is but one common air, one common sea, one common earth, so there is but one common salvation. O that we may be among those who prove its power in their own person by being saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

III. But I am persuaded that this is not what Jude meant, so I come, in the third place, to say that **IT IS COMMON TO ALL BELIEVERS**. Do you recollect what this same Jude once said to the Saviour? He asked him, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" He understands that matter now; but he is not looking so much at the "not unto the world" as at the first fact in his question, "Thou wilt manifest thyself unto us." He is evidently full of joy that the manifestation of the salvation of Jesus is common to all believers. Upon that blessed fact let us dwell.

Certain offices, gifts, attainments and enjoyments are given to some and not to others. "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?" It is not every believer that possesses full assurance, or enjoys ecstasy, or is made largely useful to others. But all believers have the common salvation. There they

share and share alike, and every one of them is saved in Christ Jesus and called. An apostle may say to the newest of his converts, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."

For, first, it is a common salvation which all believers possess, since it springs from *the same grace*. There are not some saved by grace and others by works, many by pure grace and more partly by works; but salvation is altogether of grace in every case, and that grace is the same in all who possess it. All believers are chosen by the same electing love, for the same reason, namely, to the glory of the Father's grace; and being so chosen, they are all ordained unto the same life, secured by the same covenant, and given into the hands of the same Surety. Eternal love encompasses, enriches, comforts, and preserves each individual believer, and guarantees to each the same inheritance in Christ Jesus. Brother, are you saved by grace? so am I. Am I saved by grace? Then my sister, if thou believest in Christ, thou art saved as I am.

It is a common salvation—common because we are all saved by *the same Saviour*. We are not some of us looking to Jesus, and others to Moses, or to ourselves; neither are we some of us looking to the atoning death, and others to the perfect life of Christ; but we are all saved by the same one work, life, death, resurrection and intercession of Christ Jesus. When he made atonement by blood it was for all his redeemed; when he rose it was to justify all who are in him; when he stands at the right hand of God to plead, he intercedes for all the saints; and when he cometh it will be that all his saints may be with him where he is, and may behold his glory. Do not fall into the modern notion, which divides up Christ, and allots something to one class of believers, and another portion to others of the chosen. They tell us there are such and such promises for Israel, and other promises for the church; I have not so read the word, for I am persuaded that all believers are the Israel of God. God loveth all his saints, and the same blessedness shall be to them all, and you may rejoice and be glad that God will not give special raptures and upsoarings into the skies to a portion of his family, and leave the rest in the cold. In all that is "salvation" we have a common heritage, for Christ belongs to us all, and we are all members of his body, partakers of his life, and sharers of his glory.

It is a common salvation because we are all saved through the *same faith*, we believe the same precious truth, and receive Christ in the same way. All the saved possess faith, though not all to the same degree. Would God we were all strong in faith! Still, faith is a child-like confidence in God in the greatest as much as in the least of God's people, and this is the essential requisite to salvation in every case. He that believeth in Christ is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already. To all participation in Christian privilege we have only one right: "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." Faith makes a man a fellow-commoner with the saints of God.

It is a common salvation because faith and spiritual life are wrought in us by the *same Spirit*. Faith does not come to one by the operation of free will and to another by free grace, but to every one by the same Spirit. You, then, my brother, are plucked like a brand from the burning

by the power of the Spirit of God, so also is thy friend who rejoices with thee. All are quickened by the same Spirit, and kept alive by the same Quickener. The love of the Spirit should be joyfully acknowledged by us all without exception, for the Spirit has wrought all our works in us.

It is a common salvation as to *its results*; for all believers are equally born again, and they are all renewed by him, who saith, "Behold I make all things new." Brought into the one family of God, they are all made children of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus. They are all justified, accepted, preserved, guided, upheld, and comforted. Their feet are set upon the selfsame rock, they are led in the same King's highway, and a new song is prepared for every one of their mouths. The common salvation, like the common table of a household, satisfies all their mouths with good things, and renews their youth like the eagle's.

By-and-by they shall meet in *the same heaven*. There will be no division before the throne between the different tribes and denominations of believers. One family, we dwell in him even now, with all our petty strifes; but the great family relationship shall be more fully developed by-and-by when imperfections and errors shall be cast aside. The saints before the throne will sing a common hymn unto the common Saviour as they gather in the common home, saved with a common salvation.

Brethren, I am right glad of all this. I feel inclined to stop the sermon and ask you to join in singing Charles Wesley's verse—

"Partners of a glorious hope,
Lift your hearts and voices up;
Jointly let us rise and sing
Christ our Prophet, Priest, and King."

To me it is a joyous thing that God's best gifts should be the commonest. It is so in nature: the sunshine, the dew, the air, the heavens, these cannot become the particular estate of a few; they are common blessings. When Richard the Second banished Bolingbroke that nobleman is represented as saying—

"This must my comfort be,
That sun that warms you here, shall shine on me;
And those his golden beams, to you here lent,
Shall point on me, and gild my banishment."

There is no monopolizing the best gifts, for heaven ordains them to be the right of all mankind; and so the chief things of the covenant of grace are common to all believers. One may have greater powers of speech than another; but God hath spoken to the silent brother the same promises. Gifts are to this man and to that; but the gift of salvation is to all who believe. The choicest saint may have far less of this world's riches than his brother; but the riches of God's grace are all his own by equal title. We live on common ground here, fed by our Father with the same bread from heaven. Thank God that in so many points the saints have fellowship, for all these should make them of one mind and of one heart towards each other. Some of God's children are not learned, but they shall all be taught of the Lord; all are not experienced in the deep things of God, but they are all entitled to the best things of God. There are some few points in which we are unlike, even as children of the same family differ in age, and height, or in

the colour of their eyes or hair ; but we are one in so many vital and conspicuous features, that we should with one voice and heart praise our common Father. We may not all wear the same form of garment, but we all breathe the same life. We may not eat from the same ware, but we all eat the same bread. We may not all drink from a silver chalice, but the wine is from the one cluster. " Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all " It is a great comfort to my heart that, among you who are bound to me by such loving ties, I can speak without hesitation of the common salvation ; for you know it, feel it, love it, rejoice in it, even as I do this day.

IV. That brings me to close, by noticing that this fact of the common salvation was mentioned by Jude that he might use it as an argument. So then THIS FACT HAS MANY LESSONS IN IT.

First, this common salvation *forbids a monopolizing spirit*. The old divines used to say that enclosures were contrary to law. I am afraid that I may not say so now; for almost everywhere the commons have been taken from the poor man and his goose. May there yet be an end to such enclosings. But enclosures in spiritual things are contrary to the law of Christ. Who are we that we should cut off from fellowship with us those whose fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ? Yet we have those around us who make it a point of Christianity to be *exclusive*. Their exclusions are perpetual. Shut that door! Shut that door! Shut that door! seems to be the one great command of their house, and the second is like unto it—make more doors, one within the other, and take care to bolt them all. Their sheep must keep within their fold without fail, for if they once get a bite of pasture outside the enclosure their doom is sealed. In many forms this spirit has been among our denominations, but I do not believe in it. If the spirit of Christianity begets in us love to all mankind, much more, my brethren, are we to love those in whom there is the life of God. Is it really so, that this man is to be un-Christianized because of a mistake and the other because of a misapprehension? Doth God make thy brother a Christian and dost thou try to unmake him? Doth God think so much of him as to forgive him, to give him power in prayer, and enjoyment of his presence, and dost thou think so lightly of him that thou wilt hardly own him to be a partaker in Christ at all? Does the Father smile on all his children, and do we frown on half of them? If I could do it, the last thing I should attempt would be to wall in my own special company and say, "The temple of the Lord are we." I would not wish to set a fence round about the baptized and say, "These be the church of Christ, even as many as have been immersed in water that they may be buried into his death." Beloved brethren, our Lord hath a people that are on other points as right as right can be who on the point of baptism are as wrong as wrong can be; but, for all that, they are his people, and in other respects are sound in the faith and valiant for the Lord our God. Unto such our love goeth forth, and must go forth, despite their grievous error. Upon other matters there are distinctions among believers, but yet there is a common salvation enjoyed by the Arminian as well as by the Calvinist, possessed

by the Presbyterian as well as by the Episcopalian, prized by the Quaker as well as by the Baptist. Those who are in Christ are more near of kin than they know of, and their intense unity in deep essential truth is a greater force than most of them imagine: only give it scope and it will work wonders. As for us, let us not be among the men of whom Jude says, "These be they that separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit."

Next, this doctrine fosters the spirit of benediction. Jude begins his epistle with "Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied." Brothers and sisters, fill your lungs with this healthy air. You are saved with a common salvation; desire the profit, the growth, the happiness of all who partake of this one salvation. You are in one ship; seek the good of all who sail with you. You are enlisted in one army; pray the Captain of salvation to make every soldier strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. The common salvation should excite us to seek the prosperity of every part of Zion; we would seek the good, not of our Tabernacle alone, but of every tabernacle or temple where Christians meet to worship the Most High.

Next, this fact arouses in us a common spirit of contention for the one faith. For what saith the apostle? "It is needful that I write unto you of the common salvation, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints." When the gospel is assailed we must all rise in its defence, for it is the common salvation which is involved in it. When they frightened this nation years ago with the rumour of an invasion by the French, the Russians, or somebody or other, what was the result? Everybody became warlike. Our young men joined rifle clubs, and our elderly men furbished up their old blunderbusses. Everybody hastened to arm himself to protect the common country from the coming foe; and had the enemy really arrived even the women would have shouldered their brooms to sweep the intruder over our white cliffs. Every man, woman, and child would have found some fork, or scythe, or spade, or axe wherewith to protect the common fatherland. Community of interest begets community of feeling. We are all Englishmen, and we all sing, "Britons never will be slaves"; so, in this case, when the gospel of Jesus Christ is assailed, it does not matter by whom, I feel I may call upon all Christians to take action for the common salvation. Brothers, rouse you to the fight, for more than our hearths and homes is now attacked. Do they deny the deity of Christ? It is not only *my* religion that is assailed, it is yours as well. Do they turn the grace of God into lasciviousness? It is not this branch of the church that is now endangered. The entire church is placed in jeopardy. This gospel is not my heritage or yours, it is the common domain of all the faithful, and I beseech you feel it to be so. In your own spheres and in your own ways hold the truth, and hold it firmly. You who can neither preach nor write in defence of sound doctrine can at least give negative help by refusing to countenance error. Do not go to hear those who preach false doctrine, do not encourage them in any way, do not bid them God speed. Love all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, but if a word be spoken against the Lord or against the gospel which he has revealed, turn your back upon the speaker. Be like the loving John, who, when he went

to take a bath, found Cerinthus, the heretic, there, and departed at once with all speed. I want to see more backbone in all professors, more determination never to stultify their faith by pretending to believe that black is white and that white is a shade of black. Love: do I not preach it with all my heart, and do I not bid you manifest it in your deeds? But with that love mingle a firm adherence to the truth as it is in Jesus, and a zealous resolve that it shall not lose its honour while you are capable of upholding it. Let the common salvation be protected by the earnest zeal of the entire body of the church and by us also.

This fact, I think, *puts everyone of us to the question*, It is a common salvation, but have I a part in it? It belongs to all the people of God, but am I one of them? I should like you this morning, when you get home, to write on a piece of paper, if you will, whether you are saved or not. It would be a timely searching. Here you are, on this tenth of April—write down “Saved, bless the Lord for it,” and if you are obliged to feel you could not write that down, go up into your chamber and cry mightily unto God till you can. Well, if you are able to write “saved,” then inasmuch as it is a common salvation go and try to spread that salvation among others. “Others save,” says Jude. I know, he says, “others save with fear,” but still he says “others save;” try as far as ever you can to bring others to the Saviour. A man’s salvation that he never wishes to spread among others is a salvation that is not worth having. You are not saved from selfishness if you do not wish to see your children, and relatives, and neighbours, yea, and all the world brought to Jesus’ feet. If it be a common salvation go and make it common.

And, lastly, this text *calls for a common song of praise* from all those who have the common salvation, and I cannot suggest to you a better doxology than that with which Jude closes his epistle: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Epistle of Jude.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—84 (Song II.), 674, 486.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

REJECTERS OF THE GOSPEL ADMONISHED.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear."—Isaiah xxviii. 12.

ASSUREDLY Isaiah was one of the most eloquent of preachers, and yet he could not win the ears and hearts of those to whom he spoke, for it is written, "they would not hear." Beyond all question he was thoroughly evangelical; for, as Dr. Watts truly says, he spoke more of Jesus Christ than all the rest of the prophets, and yet the message of love was treated as though it were an idle tale. His doctrine was clear as the daylight, and yet men would not see it; so that he had to ask with sorrow, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" It was not the fault of the preacher that Israel rejected his warnings: all the fault lay with that disobedient and gainsaying nation. The people to whom he spoke so earnestly were drunken in a double sense. They were overcome with wine, and so general was this vice that Isaiah says, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." What can be conceived of more potent to blunt the point of gospel truth than intoxication or excess? When a man is given to wine how can the Spirit of God dwell in him? How is it likely that the truth shall enter an ear which has been rendered deaf by this degrading vice? How is the word of God likely to operate upon a conscience that has been drenched and drowned by strong drink? I charge you, if any of you are given to drunkenness, flee from this destroyer before your bands are made strong and you are hopelessly fettered by the habit. It is small wonder that the preacher is defeated if his ardent zeal has to compete with ardent spirits. When Bacchus rolls the wine-cask against the door it is hard to force an entrance, even though we demand it in the name of King Jesus. Men are in an ill state for hearing when the barrel and the bottle are their idols. It is

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not at all marvellous that the gospel should be neglected by men who have put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains.

The people to whom Isaiah spoke were also drunken in another sense, namely, intoxicated with pride. Their country was fruitful, and its chief city, Samaria, stood on the hill top, like a diadem of beauty crowning the land, and they delighted in the glorious beauty which is on the head of the fat valley. They themselves were brave, and among them were many champions whose strength sufficed to turn the battle to the gate, therefore they hoped to resist every invader, and so their hearts were lifted up. Moreover, they said—"We are an intelligent people; we want no teaching, or if indeed we endure instruction it must be of a high class; we are men of cultured intellect, instructed scribes, and we do not need persons like Isaiah to weary us with their ding-dong of 'precept upon precept, line upon line,' as if we were mere children at school. Besides, we are good enough. Do we not worship our God under the form of the golden calves of Belial? Do we not respect the sacrifices and the holy days?" So spoke the more religious of them, while the rest gloried in their shame. Being intoxicated with pride it was not likely that they would hear the message of the prophet, who bade them turn from their evil ways. Even so he that is righteous in his own esteem is never likely to accept the righteousness of Christ. He who boasts that he can see will never ask to have his eyes opened. He who claims that he was born free, and was never in bondage unto any man, is not likely to accept the liberty of Christ. Pride is the devil's drag-net in which he taketh more fishes than in any other, except procrastination. The destruction of those who are proud is certain; for who can help the man that refuses to be helped, and where is the likelihood that there shall be either repentance of his sin or faith in Christ in the man who does not know that he has sinned, and who believes that if he has done so he can easily wipe out the stain?

The two forms of drunkenness are equally destructive, and I beg to call your attention to this fact. Whether body or soul be intoxicated mischief will surely come of it. Many are pleased if I speak against drunkenness of the body, and I feel bound to speak as earnestly as I possibly can, for it is a monster evil; but I beseech you who are sober, and perhaps total abstainers, to dread the other intoxication; for if any one of us should be intoxicated with pride on account of our own sobriety it will be ruinous to our souls. What if we are temperate and self-denying, there is nothing in this whereof to glory; we ought to be greatly ashamed of ourselves if we were not so. Let us not get drunk with pride because we are not drunkards; for if we are so vain and foolish, we shall as certainly perish by pride as we should have done by drink. I am indeed rejoiced when a man gives up his cups; but I am far more happy when at the same time he renounces his self-confidence; for, if not, he may still remain so besotted as to refuse the gospel and perish by his own wilful rejection of mercy. May the Holy Spirit deliver us all from such a sad condition. I confess I feel encouraged this morning by Isaiah's want of success. When he says, "They would not hear," I comfort myself concerning those who pay no heed to my exhortations; perhaps it is no more my fault than it was Isaiah's. At any rate, if Isaiah still went on speaking even when

he cried, "Who hath believed our report?" much more may I, who am so much inferior to him, be willing to persevere in telling out my Master's message as long as my tongue will move. Peradventure God may grant repentance to the obstinate, and ears may yet be unstopped, and hearts may yet be softened; therefore, let us try again, and once more publish the glad tidings of peace. If the blessed Spirit be with us we shall not give the gospel call in vain, but men will fly to Jesus as doves to their windows.

First, I wish to speak this morning upon *the excellence of the gospel*; secondly, upon *the objections taken to it*; and thirdly, upon *the Divine requital of these objections*.

I. Let us consider **THE EXCELLENCE OF THE GOSPEL** as it is set forth in the passage before us. This Scripture does not allude to the gospel primarily, but to the message which Isaiah had to deliver, which was in part the command of the law and in part the promise of grace: but the same rule holds good of all the words of the Lord; and indeed any excellence which was found in the prophet's message is found yet more abundantly in the fuller testimony of the gospel in Christ Jesus.

Using the passage for ourselves, and referring it to the gospel ministry in this day, the excellence of that gospel lies, first, *in its object*; it is excellent in its design, for *it is a revelation of rest*. We, as Christ's ambassadors, are sent to proclaim to you that which shall give you ease, peace, quiet, rest. It is true we have to begin with certain truths that disturb and distress; but our object is to dig out the foundation into which may be laid the stones of restfulness. The message of the gospel which fell from the mouth of its own author is this—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Over Bethlehem the angels sang "Peace on earth, good will toward men." The object of the gospel is not to make men anxious, but to calm their anxieties; not to fill them with endless controversy, but to lead them into all truth. The gospel gives rest of conscience by the complete forgiveness of sin through the atoning blood of Christ; rest of heart by supplying an object for the affections worthy of their love; and rest of intellect by teaching it certainties which can be accepted without question. Our message does not consist of things guessed at by wit, nor evolved out of man's inner consciousness by study, nor developed by argument through human reason; but it treats of revealed certainties, absolutely and infallibly true, upon which the understanding may rest itself as thoroughly as a building rests upon a foundation of rock. The word of the Lord comes to give believing men rest about the present by telling them that God ordereth all things for their good; and as for the future it brightens all coming time and eternity with promises. It rolls away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, annihilates destruction, and reveals resurrection, immortality, and eternal life through Jesus Christ, the Saviour. The man who will hear the gospel message, and receive it into his soul, shall know the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which shall keep his heart and mind by Jesus Christ. The believer of this gospel shall not make haste by reason of affright; he shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end. It is true that after being a believer he may at times be disturbed in mind; yet

this shall not be the result of the gospel, but of that in him which the gospel promises to remove. He shall have rest in Christ, even "quietness and assurance for ever." It is written "for this man shall be the peace." "Being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord." This message, which Isaiah had to deliver, saying, "This is the rest and this is the refreshing," is the glad tidings which we are taught to deliver in still plainer words, saying to you that in Christ Jesus, in the atoning sacrifice, in the great plan of grace through the Mediator, there is rest for the weary, sweet rest for burdened souls, rest for you if you come and cast yourself at the feet of the blessed Saviour. Our authorized message from the Lord God is a revelation of rest. The Lord hath promised to obedient minds that they shall dwell in quiet resting-places.

More than that, *it is the cause of rest*—"This is the rest wherewith ye may *cause* the weary to rest." The gospel of our salvation is not only a command to rest, but it brings the gift of rest within itself. Our Lord saith, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Let the gospel be admitted into the heart and it will create a profound calm, hushing all the tumult and strife of conscience, removing all apprehensions of divine wrath, stilling all rebellion against the supreme will, and so working in the spirit by the energy of the Holy Ghost a deep and blessed peace. Oh that we may know and possess this peace of God. The gospel, then, is a message which speaks of peace, and also creates peace. He who sends it is "the Lord and giver of peace," and his effectual power goes with the message where it is faithfully delivered and honestly accepted, creating peace within the secret chambers of the soul.

This rest is especially meant for the weary. "This is the rest wherewith ye may *cause* the weary to rest." If you have been trying to find peace for years and cannot meet with it, here is the goodly pearl you have been seeking after; if you have been labouring and toiling to keep the law and have failed, here is more than the righteousness that your conscience has been craving. In Jesus crucified you will find all things, for "he is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption!" Oh ye that are weary with the round of worldly pleasure, satiated, nauseated with the vanities and delusions of the carnal mind, come hither and find true joy. O ye that are worn with ambition, fretted with disappointment, embittered by the faithlessness of those you trusted in, come and confide in Jesus and be at rest. Weary, weary, weary ones, here is the rest, here is the refreshing. Jesus expressly puts it, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If your backs are breaking, if your hearts are breaking, if your eyes are failing through weary watching and waiting, come to the Saviour just as you are, for he will be your rest. Despondent and despairing, condemned, and in your own conscience cast out to the gates of hell, yet look to Jesus and rest shall be yours. You cannot be too far gone for the Mighty Redeemer; you cannot be too lost for the Saviour to find; too black for his blood to cleanse; too dead for the Spirit to quicken. This is the rest wherewith he maketh the weary to

rest. Oh, it is a blessed, blessed message that God has sent to the sons of men. How is it that they refuse it?

In addition to bringing us rest, *the message of mercy points us to a refreshing*: "This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing." If the rested one should grow weary again, the good Shepherd will give him refreshing; if he wanders, the Lord will restore him; if he grows faint, he will revive him; yea, he has begun his gracious work of renewing, and he will continue it by renewing the heart from day to day, blending the will with his own, and making the whole man more and more to rejoice in him. I know there are some of God's people here who are faint and thirsty. You are specially invited, as well as those who never came before, for if this is the rest for the weary this also is the refreshing for the fainting; and if the sinner may come and find peace in Christ, much more may you, who though you have wandered from him like lost sheep, have not forgotten his commandments. Come, ye desponding ones, come back to Jesus, for this is the rest and this is the refreshing.

Now note with peculiar joy that Isaiah did not come to these people to talk about rest in dubious terms, and say, "There is no doubt a rest to be found somewhere in that goodness of God of which it is reasonable to conjecture." No; he puts his finger right down on the truth, and he says, "*This is the rest, and this is the refreshing.*" Even so we at this day, when we come to you with a message from God, come *with definite teaching*, laying our hand upon the slaughtered Lamb of God we cry, "*This is the rest and this is the refreshing.*" We speak of substitution, of Christ's dying in the sinner's stead, of vicarious sacrifice, of Christ's being numbered with the transgressors, and of our sin laid upon our Surety and borne by him, and put away from us by him, so as never to be mentioned against us any more for ever; and we proclaim in the name of God that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life: this is the rest, and this is the refreshing. It was said of a certain preacher of the modern school that he taught that our Lord Jesus Christ did something or other which in some way or other was connected with the pardon of sin: this is the preaching of a great number of our intellectual divines; but we have not so learned Christ, neither is this the doctrine by which we have obtained rest to our souls. God has revealed fixed and positive truth, and it is ours to state it clearly and without hesitation. Our cry is, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners": this is the rest and this is the refreshing. Something definite, something positive Isaiah had to preach to the people, and yet they would not hear; perhaps if he had prophesied conjectures and dreams they would have listened.

Nor did he preach a rest of a selfish character. They say we teach men to get peace and rest for themselves, and make themselves comfortable, whatever becomes of others. How these men lie in their throats: they know better, and they forge these falsehoods because their heart is false. Are we not always bidding men look out from themselves, and love others even as Christ has loved them? Our words and acts for the good of others prove that we do not delight in selfishness. We abhor the idea that personal safety is the consummation of a religious

man's desires; for we believe that the life of grace is the death of selfishness. This is one of the glories of the gospel, that "this is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest." Get rest yourself and you will soon cause other weary minds to rest. As soon as you have learned the divine secret it will become in your hands a blessed charm with which you, too, by God's grace may become givers of rest. With this lamp you may enlighten all that are in the dark as God shall help you. That secret something which your own heart possesses shall enable you to communicate good cheer to many a weary heart, and hope to many a desponding mind. "This is the rest wherewith ye shall cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." But this is true of the gospel, and of that only. If you get away from Jesus Christ, and his atonement, and God's great plan of grace, you can cause no rest to others, yea, there is none for yourselves. This, then, is the excellency of the gospel, that it propounds to men a blessed rest.

The other excellency of the gospel, of which I shall speak at this time, lies in its *manner*.

First, I count it a great excellency of the gospel that it *comes with authority*. Read the ninth verse. Even the cavillers acknowledged its authority, for they called the prophet's message "knowledge" and "doctrine." The gospel does not pretend to be a speculative scheme or a theory of philosophy which will suit the nineteenth century but will be exploded in the twentieth. No; we speak what we do know, not what we dream nor imagine, but what we know. If, my brethren, the gospel of Jesus Christ be not a fact I dare not ask you to believe it, but if it be a fact it is not my "opinion," not "my views," as men are always saying; it is the great fact of time and of eternity which is and must be true for ever. Christ stood in the stead of men, and has become God's salvation for the sons of men; this is the witness of God. We do not make guesses, we utter knowledge. The word, which is in this place translated "doctrine," is in the Hebrew "message," and it is the same which is used in the passage, "Who hath believed our *report*?" which should better run, "Who hath believed our message?" The gospel comes to men as a message from God, and he that speaks it aright does not speak it as a thinker uttering his own thoughts; but he utters what he has learned, and acts as God's tongue, repeating what he finds in God's word by the power of God's Spirit. The gospel that I have thought out may not be half as good as one which you have thought out, and your cogitation and mine, and all the rest of the produce of thinkers put together, may only be fit to make a fire and a smoke in the garden with the rest of the weeds. But if we receive and accept a message direct from God, then this is its main excellence. I pray you delight in the gospel because it comes from God to us, and tells us unmingled truth with absolute certainty. If we believe it we shall be saved, and he that believeth not well deserves the damnation which is pronounced against him. There is no hope nor help for it: this is the inevitable alternative—believe the gospel and live, refuse it and be destroyed.

Another excellence of the gospel as to its manner was that *it was delivered with great simplicity*. Isaiah came with it "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." It is the glory

of the gospel that it is so plain. If it were so mysterious that nobody could understand it but doctors of divinity,—I do not know how many there may be here this morning, I do not suppose above a dozen or so,—what a sorry case the rest of us would be in. If it was so profound that we must take a degree at a university before we could comprehend it, what a miserable gospel it would be for mocking the world with; but it is divinely sublime in its simplicity, and hence the common people hear it gladly. As the verse seems to imply, it is fitted for those who are weaned from the breast, those who are little more than babes may yet drink in this unadulterated milk of the word. Many a little child has comprehended the salvation of Jesus Christ sufficiently to rejoice in it, and there are those in heaven not much above two or three years of age, who, ere they went there, bore good witness for Christ to those who loved them and marvelled at their words. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings has God ordained strength. Christianity has been called the religion of children, and its founder said that none could receive it except as a little child. I bless God for a simple gospel, for it suits me, and thousands of others whose minds cannot boast of greatness or genius. It equally suits men of intellect, and it is only quarrelled with by pretenders. The man who lacks breadth of mind and depth of thought, is the man to cavil at the wisdom of God. An affected creature who is little above an idiot will brush his hair backwards, put on his spectacles, wrinkle his brows, and amend the infallible Word; but a man who really has a capacious mind is usually childlike, and, like Sir Isaac Newton, is glad to sit at Jesus' feet. Great minds love the simple gospel of God, for they find rest in it from all the worry and the weariness of questions and of doubts.

It is an excellent thing that the gospel is *taught us by degrees*. It is not forced home upon men's minds all at once, but it comes thus, "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." God does not flash the everlasting daylight on weak eyes in one blaze of glory, but there is at first a dim dawn, and the soft incoming of a tender light for tender eyes, and so by degrees we see.

The gospel is repeated: if we do not see it at once it comes again to us, for it is "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little." From morning to morning, from Sunday to Sunday, by book after book, by text after text, by spiritual impression after spiritual impression, the divine gentleness makes us wise unto salvation. This is a grand excellence of the gospel method.

It is brought down to us and *brought home to us in ways suitable to our capacity*. It is told to us, as it were, with stammering lips (see verse 11), just as mothers teach their little children in a language all their own. I should not like to speak from the pulpit as mothers talk to their babes; yet they use the best language for the baby, the very words for a little child to understand. Even so in much of the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, we see how God condescends to lay aside his own speech and talk the language of men. I know not with what language the Father converses with his Son, but to us he speaks after our own fashion. "As the heavens are high above the earth, so are his thoughts above our thoughts"; but he bows to us and tells us his mind in types and ordinances, which are a sort

of child language fitted for our capacity. In the gospel of Johu,— what child language, what depth! what love! If you, my hearer, do not understand the word of God it is not because he does not put the word plainly, but because of the blindness of your hearts and the besotted condition of your spirit. Take heed that you are not drunken with the wine of pride, but be willing to learn, for God himself hath not darkened counsel by mysterious words, but he has put his mind before you as plainly as the sun in the heavens. “Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.”

II. Alas, my time is nearly gone, and I need much more space in which to do justice to my subject. I have now, in the second place, to notice THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE TAKEN TO THE GOSPEL.

First, let me say that they are most *wanton*. For men to object to the gospel is a piece of wanton foolishness, because they object to that which promises them rest. Above all the things in the world this is what our troubled spirits need: rest is our heart's craving; and the gospel comes and says, “I will give you rest.” And do men reject that blessing? This is lamentable indeed! What, were you ill and did you insult the only physician that could cure you? Why were you so foolish? What, were you in debt, and did you actually refuse help from a generous friend who would have given you all you wanted? “No,” say you, “we are not so foolish.” But oh, the intense folly, the desperate insanity of men, that when the gospel sets rest before them they will not hear it, but turn upon their heel. There is no system of doctrine under heaven that can give quiet to the conscience of men, quiet that is worth having, except the gospel; and there are thousands of us who bear witness that we live in the daily enjoyment of peace through believing in Jesus, and yet our honest report is not believed, nay, they will not hear the truth. Now, if God came demanding something of you I could understand your refusing. I have heard of a poor woman who locked her door, and when she heard a rap did not answer it, behaving as though she was not at home. Her minister saw her a day or two after he had called, and he said, “I called to see you the other day; I wanted to give you help, for I knew that you were very poor; but no one answered to my knocking.” “Oh,” she said, “I am very sorry, but I thought it was the landlord calling for the rent.” She shut out her benefactor through mistaking him for her creditor. The Lord is not calling in the gospel for that which is due to him, nor asking anything of you, but he approaches you with perfect rest in his hand, the very thing you want, and yet you shut the door of your heart against him. O do not so. Be wise, and play not the fool any longer. May God help you to be wise for your own eternal good. Admit your God with all his heavenly gifts.

Next, objections against the gospel are *wilful*, even as it is here said, “This is the refreshing, yet they would not hear.” When men say that they cannot believe the gospel, ask them whether they will patiently hear it in all its simplicity. No, they say, they do not want to hear it. The gospel is so difficult to believe, so they say. Will they come and hear it preached in its fulness? Will they read the gospels for themselves carefully? Oh, no, they cannot take the trouble. Just so. But a man who does not want to be convinced, must not blame anybody if he remains in error. He that will not hear what the gospel has to say need

not wonder that objections swarm in his mind. The gospel asks of men a fair hearing; the Lord says, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live," for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" how sad that they will not even hear God's message of love. It is a wilful objection to the gospel, then, when men refuse even to hear what the gospel has to say, or if they hear it with the outward ear, but will not give hearty attention to its truths.

Such objections are *wicked*, because they are rebellion against God, and an insult to his truth and mercy. If this gospel be of God, I am bound to receive it: I have no right to cavil at it, nor raise questions, philosophical or otherwise. It is mine just to say, "Does God say this and that? Then it is true, and I yield to it." Does the Lord thus set before me a way of salvation? I will run in it with delight.

But these people raised objections that were *the outgrowth of their pride*. They objected to the simplicity of Isaiah's preaching. They said, "Who is he? You should not go to hear him: he talks to us as if we were children. Go to hear the learned Rabbi over the way, who is so refined and cultured. As for this man, he is not fit to teach any but those who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts; for with him it is 'precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little.' He is so very homely that his sermons may suit for servant girls and old women, and so on, but they are not to be endured by intellectual people. Besides, it is the same thing over and over again. You may go when you like, he is always harping on the same string." They say this very savagely, too, for as old Trapp says, "The duller the brains the sharper the teeth with which to rend the preacher." Have you not heard folks say in these days concerning a true gospel preacher that he is always preaching about sovereign grace or the blood of Christ, or crying out, "Believe, believe and you shall be saved"? They sneer and say, "It is the old ditty over and over again." I am not a Hebrew scholar, but those who are so tell us that the passage translated "precept upon precept, line upon line," was uttered in ridicule, and sounded like a ding dong rhyme with which they mocked Isaiah. You would smile if I read you the Hebrew according to the sound with which, in all probability, it was pronounced. They said, "This is the way Isaiah preaches; 'Tzav latzav, tzav latzav; kav lakav, kav lakav: zecir sham, zecir sham.'" The words were intended to caricature the preacher, though they do not suggest the idea when translated,—“precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line,” they do suggest it readily enough in the Hebrew. There are people now living who, when the gospel is plainly and simply preached, exclaim "We want progressive thought, we want"—they do not quite know what they do want. They are something like the congregation who, when a certain Bishop of London was preaching to them, were utterly inattentive, whereupon the good man took up his Hebrew Bible and read them five or six verses in the Hebrew tongue, and at once they were all awake. Then he rebuked them by saying, "Verily, I perceive that when I preach you good doctrine you do not care about it, but when I read to you in a tongue which you do not comprehend, straightway you open your ears." An affectation of special refinement is supported by listening to talk which is incomprehensible. Too many

wish for a map to heaven so mysteriously drawn that they may be excused from following it. Multitudes delight in prayers in the Latin tongue, and others prefer them in no tongue at all, but intoned through the nose. Music and milinery, processions and pomposities are preferred by thousands because they prefer sensuous enjoyment to spiritual instruction. We know those who prefer the gospel shrouded in a mist; they love to see the wisdom of man shut out the wisdom of God. This was the style of objection current in Isaiah's day, and it is fashionable still. Did I hear anyone remark—"Why you, yourself, preach nothing but faith, atonement, free grace, and so on. We want novelties, and will go elsewhere for them?" So you may if you like; I shall not change my note while God preserves me.

III. The third point will be a warning to those who have no relish for the truth of God: let us consider THE DIVINE REQUITAL OF THESE OBJECTORS. The Lord threatens them, first, with *the loss of that which they despised*. He has sent them a message of rest and they will not have it, and therefore, in the twentieth verse, he warns them that they shall have no rest henceforth: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." All those who wilfully reject the gospel, and take up with philosophies and speculations, will be rewarded with inward discontent. Ask them, "Have you found rest?" "Oh, no," say they, "we are further off than ever." "But you hoped that if you listened to this philosophical doctrine you would then be happy." They reply, "Oh, no, we are seeking still." Ask the preachers of that kind of doctrine whether they themselves have found an anchorage, and as a rule they will answer, "No, no, we are in pursuit of truth; we are hunting after it, but we have not reached it yet." They are never likely to reach it, for they are on the wrong track. The gospel was made to rest conscience, soul, heart, will, memory, hope, fear, yea, the entire man, but when men laugh at all fixity of belief how can they be rested? Dear friend, if you have not found rest you have not yet grasped the entire gospel; and you have need to go back to the fundamental principle of faith in Jesus, for this is the rest, and this is the refreshing. This is the condemnation of the unbeliever, that he shall never find a settlement, but like the wandering Jew shall roam for ever. Leave the cross and you have left the hinge of all things and neglected the one sure corner stone and fixed foundation, and henceforth you shall be as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:" "The wicked is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Furthermore the Lord threatens them that they shall be punished by *a gradual hardening of heart*. Read the thirteenth verse. They said that Isaiah's message was "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and justice answers them, "Even so it shall be to you, a thing despised and ridiculed, so that you will go further away from it; you will fall backward and be broken, and snared and taken." See verse thirteen. A fall backward is the worst kind of fall. If a man falls forward he may somewhat save himself and rise again, but if he falls backward he falls with all his weight, and is helpless. Those who stumble at Christ, the sure foundation stone, shall be broken. When

opposers hope to retrieve their position they find themselves snared by their habits, entangled in the net of the great fowler, and taken by the destroyer. This downward course is followed full often by those who begin cavilling at a simple gospel : they cavil more and more, and become its open enemies to their eternal ruin. If men will not have the gospel of rest as the Lord has appointed it, he will not alter it to their tastes, but permit it to exercise its inevitable influence upon opposers by its being a savour of death unto death. If they dislike it to-day they shall dislike it more to-morrow ; if they refuse to feel its energy to-day, they shall refuse yet more obstinately as time rolls on, and its power shall not go forth to enlighten or impress or comfort their hearts.

This is a terrible thing ; and what is still worse, if worse can be, this is to be followed by a *growing inability to understand* : " For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people." Since they would not hear plain speech, God will make simplicity itself to seem like stammering to them. Men that cannot endure simple language shall at last become unable to understand it. You know, my brethren, how large a body of mankind are at this day unable to understand the Saviour. The Saviour said, " This is my body " : and straightway they conclude that a piece of bread is transformed into the flesh of Christ. The Saviour commands believers to be baptized into his death, and straightway they proclaim that the water of baptism regenerates children. They will not understand it, what is clear as the sun. They take our Lord's illustrations literally, and when he speaks literally they dream that he is using metaphor. If men will not understand they shall not understand. A man may shut his eyes so long that he cannot open them. In India many devotees have held up their arms so long that they can never take them down again. Beware lest an utter imbecility of heart come upon those of you who refuse the gospel. If you charge God's word with being childish you shall grow childish yourselves, as many great philosophers of our day have done ; if you say that it is simple, and refuse it because of its plainness, you will become simpletons yourselves ; if you say it is beneath you it will turn out that you will be beneath it, and it will grind you to powder.

Lastly, this warning is given to those who object to the gospel, that *whatever refuge they choose for themselves shall utterly fail them*. Thus saith the Lord,—“ Judgment will I also lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet : and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.” Down come the great hailstones dashing everything to shivers—the threatenings of God's word breaking to pieces all the false and flattering hopes of the ungodly. Then comes the active wrath of God like an overwhelming flood to sweep away everything on which the sinner stood, and he, in his obstinate unbelief, is carried away as with a flood into that utter destruction, that everlasting misery, which God has declared shall be the lot of all those who refuse the living Jesus Christ. Beware, ye despisers ! Beware in time !

I have earnestly tried at this time, in simple language, to set before you the wickedness of refusing the gospel of rest. May the Spirit of God grant that any here who have hitherto neglected it may at once accept it. Try it, weary heart ; try it, despondent spirit ; try what faith in Jesus can do.

Come and trust in Jesus, and see if it does not bring peace to your soul. If Jesus fails you let me know it, for I will never extol again if he breaks his promises. He can never cast off or cast away a believing heart. Oh, if there be sweet peace, and calm, and joyful hope, and gladness, and strength; and life, to be had by childlike faith in God's testimony concerning his dear Son, I pray God that you may obtain it at once. If you feel an objection to the preacher who now addresses you pray God that he may preach better; and if you have done so, and he is still distasteful to you, go and hear somebody who will not be personally objectionable, for it would be a grief of heart to me to stand in the way of even one anxious heart. I fear that you yourself stand in your own light. O man, act like a man and hear the gospel candidly. O self! wilt thou destroy thyself? O pride! lower thy crest. O drunkenness! quit thy cups. O hardened sinner! God help thee to leave thy sin. Come and trust Jesus this day. May God enable you so to do by his Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON.—Isaiah xxviii.

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THE CANDLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—Matthew v. 15, 16.

OUR Saviour was speaking of the influence of his disciples upon their fellows, and he first of all mentioned that secret but powerful influence which he describes under the figure of salt: "Ye are the salt of the earth." No sooner is a man born unto God than he begins to affect his fellow-men with an influence which is rather felt than seen. The very existence of a believer operates upon unbelievers. He is like a handful of salt cast upon flesh; he has a savour in himself, and this begins to penetrate those who are in contact with him. The unobserved, and almost unconscious influence of a holy life is most effectual to the conserving of society and the prevention of moral putrefaction. May there be salt in every one of us, for "salt is good." Have salt in yourselves, and then you will become a blessing to all around you.

But there is about every true Christian a manifest and visible influence which he is bound to exercise, and this our Lord sets forth under the figure of light: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." In any case the genuine Christian will exercise the silent and unseen salting influence upon those who come into immediate contact with him; but let him also labour to possess the second, or illuminating influence, which covers a far larger area, and deals more with real life; for salt is for dead flesh, and light for living men. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Saltiness and light are the power of a Christian. I do not believe that any man will give forth light if he has not first received salt; and yet some have a measure of salt who are none too liberal with their light. May God grant us grace to balance the inward and the outward. May we have the conserving salt and the diffusive light. Our thoughts will now run towards light-giving, and I pray that I may be helped to move the more retiring and less active among us to exert their influence upon others to a greater

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light. So, beloved, the grace of God, the light from heaven, must come to each one of us individually from the divine hand, and we must personally receive it. Light is not inherent in any one of us, and therefore it must be bestowed. Its bestowal necessitates a personal acceptance. It is not bestowed upon us as part of a nation or family. In its enlightening operations grace does not deal with men in the gross, but with each man by himself. Sin is personal, and so must grace be. We are individually in the darkness, and must be individually kindled into light. One by one each man must accept the light, permitting it, as it were, to kindle upon him, so that the very wick of his being, that innermost life which goes through the very centre of his nature, shall embrace the flame and begin to burn with it. There must be an individual appropriation of the light, so that to each one of you it becomes your own. "Let your light so shine before men." Do not deceive yourselves with the notion of national Christianity or hereditary Christianity; the only true religion is personal godliness. We cannot light these candles by the pound at a time, nor heap up lamps in a pile and light them in a mass. We have nowadays wonderful lights, which can be all lit in an instant by a single touch of electricity; but even then each one of the lights has to receive a flame for itself, which becomes all its own. There is no way by which individuality can be destroyed and men saved *en masse*.

In each man the light is peculiar and distinct. The light that burns in one true minister of Christ is the same which shines forth from another, and yet one star differeth from another star in glory: Peter is not John, Paul is not James, Whitefield is not Wesley. You shall examine the whole range of God's lamps and candlesticks and you shall not find two exactly alike. Many artists exhaust themselves and then repeat themselves; but God is inexhaustibly original; no two touches of his pencil are the same. Light is one, and its glory is one, and yet there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. There is a difference in the lights of various oils and gases, and so there is in your light, my brother, and my light. It is very possible that you would like to put my candle in order; you may do so if you can, but do not snuff me out. Your own light is, however, your main concern, and you had better ask for special grace that it may not fail. Your light is distinct from mine, as distinct as your life is from mine, though in another sense it is true that your spiritual light is one with all the light that ever shone in this world. There is in the lighting a personal appropriation of the divine flame, and afterwards a personal and distinct sending forth of the sacred light in the individual's own way. Look ye well to this, lest ye be mistaken, and suppose yourselves to be lighted from heaven when you are the mere will-o'-the-wisps of delusion.

I like our translators reading the word candle—"Neither do men light a candle," for nowadays a candle is the smallest of all lights. We almost despise a candle in these days of the electric light; yet small lights are useful, and tiny lamps have their sphere. God has many small lights; in his great house he has candles as well as stars, and he would not have even a small light wasted. Even the most twinkling ray of light is of God's kindling: think of that, you who cannot do more than talk to a child or give away a tract for love of his dear name.

You are a little light, but if the Lord has given you even a spark of the sacred fire he means that you should shine. In this world there are many lights, but none too many. We could not spare the sun, and it would be a calamity if the smallest star were quenched. We cannot spare those modern inventions which so cheer us by turning our city's night into day; but I wot we should miss even the glowworm from its dewy haunt in the quiet lane. We cannot afford to lose a ray of light in this misty, foggy, all-beclouded sky of ours. The church and the world need all the light that has been vouchsafed, and much more. I, therefore, would press upon all my brethren and sisters here who may happen to have but one talent the necessity of their putting it out to interest. Your light, my friend, may be but a farthing rushlight, but you must not hide it, for all lights are of God, and are sent with a kind and gracious purpose by the great Father of lights.

Note further, that lighting is a work which needs sustaining. Whilst lighting is a process performed in a moment, it is also, as a matter of fact, prolonged; for the lamp needs to be trimmed, and it would be ill to light a lamp and leave it to itself. The lamp must have fresh oil from time to time, since by shining it consumes its fuel. Do not any of you, therefore, think if you can fix upon a certain time and say, "I was converted then," that you may live as you like afterwards. God forbid! The saints prove their conversion by their perseverance, and that perseverance comes from a continual supply of divine grace to their souls. Judge ye, then, yourselves by this, not so much whether on a certain special occasion you were turned from darkness to light, but are you still "light in the Lord"? Have you oil in your vessels with your lamps? Are you looking unto Jesus? It was well that you looked; but are you looking? for that is the great thing. Remember, it is a present business—looking. It is well that you came to Jesus, but that is merely the beginning; it is "to whom coming," coming continually, as unto a living stone. Our lungs must have, as we all know, fresh supplies of air. It will avail me nothing that I breathed yesterday; I am dead, unless I breathe to-day. We must have constant food: you ate yesterday; but could you without hunger and weakness go without to-day? We continually need to be built up as to our bodies, and it is just the same with our souls, and if we neglect this, if we fancy that something done twenty years ago is all that is wanted, we shall make a great mistake. There must be the frequent trimming of the lamp, which is, in effect, a continuation of the lighting.

Once again, let me say that this work of lighting is a work which when it is done upon a man consecrates him entirely to the service of light giving. A candle once lit, if it continues alight will be all consumed in giving light. It is what it was made for, not to be laid by in a glass case and looked at, but to be burned away. Blessed is the man who can say, "My zeal hath consumed me." You will say that in the case of the lamp the lamp itself is not consumed. No, but it is consecrated to the one purpose of lighting the house, and it contains the supply of oil by which the flame is fed. The whole of the lamp, whether it be of gold or silver or clay, or whatever it may be, is dedicated to the one purpose of giving light: and if God ever comes and lights you, my dear brother, you are henceforth separated from all

other purposes, and appointed to the one calling. You may be a great many other things according to your human calling, but these must be subordinate. I wish that some men kept earthly things much more subordinate than they do. The first thing in a Christian is his Christianity. The chief business of one whom God has called is that he should live as the elect of God. Look at Christ Jesus, he was a carpenter, but I confess I seldom think of him as such: it is as the Saviour of men, and the servant of God that he comes before my mind. Even thus a Christian man ought so to live if he be a carpenter that the Christian swallows up the carpenter; and if he be a business man, or a man of letters, or an orator, he ought so to live that the most conspicuous about him is that he is a Christian. He is a lamp, and his one business is to shine. You may use a candle for many purposes; I saw a man grease a saw with one the other day, and another made his boots fit for walking in the snow in like manner; but still these are not the objects for which a candle is designed: it has missed the object of its existence if it does not give light. I suppose on occasions you might use a lamp for a weight, or for some other purposes; but it would not be the fit instrument for any purpose except that of giving light. Every thing is best when fulfilling its proper purpose. Have you ever seen a swan out of water? How ungrainly is his walk! What an unwieldy bird he seems! But see him on the water. What a fine model for a ship! What grace! What beauty! So is it with the Christian, his beauty is best seen in his proper element; give him any other aim and he is awkward and uncomely. When seeking to instruct and save his fellow man, he is where God would have him, and then all the lines of creating wisdom, and all the beauties of divine grace are manifested in him. Let us take care then about this lighting, that it be lighting from above, that it be a lighting such as makes the light our own, and that it be a lighting which takes possession of us, and consecrates us entirely, and is perpetually sustained by the visitation of the Spirit of God. So much on that first point.

II. We will now, in the second place, consider THE PLACING. "No man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel." It is a great point this placing of a man—it may hide his light or send it further afield. The chief matter is the lighting him, and getting him to have light to give; but the next most important thing is where to put him when he is alight. For some men when they first find Christ are in the wrong place altogether. How can a lamp shine if it be dropped into a river? After the conversion of certain persons their removal becomes necessary. It is significant that when God called Abraham he did not let him stop in Ur of the Chaldees: the place for Abraham to shine was not even in Haran; but he must get into the chosen country and wander as a shepherd prince, for only there and in that character could Abraham shine to the glory of God. Most men will be wise to stay where they are and shine; but others must undergo a great change of position before they will be able to scatter their light to the extent which the Lord intends for them. That may account, my friend, for your having more trouble since you were converted than you ever had before. You have been left to lie still till now, but you are wanted, and so you are fetched out from your hiding. It did not matter where you were when you

gave no light, you were just as well behind a box or in a closet as anywhere else : but now that you are lighted you must be put on a lamp-stand, and hence you are undergoing processes of providence that are somewhat painful to you. Our placing, whether it has necessitated removal or not, is largely done by the providence of God : one man is placed here and another there, and it is well for us to look at our position from this point of view. God puts us where we can best serve his cause and bless our age. If you had your choice, perhaps, if you had to be a street lamp, you would like to be a lamp in Hyde Park, to shine upon the nobles who pass that way. But the poor souls want lights far more down that blind alley, down that den of a court, where wild Irish are quarrelling, or drunkards murdering their wives. He that loves God, if he had his choice, might sooner choose to shine in the worse place than in the better. "Oh, that I lived in the midst of a warm-hearted church!" says one. If you are an earnest, thorough-going man, I am glad that you are placed in that dreary village where the people are pretty nearly starved for spiritual life. "What," cries one, "glad that I have to suffer so much?" No, not for that, but because if you are a strong man, you will not suffer, but you will make other people suffer ; that is to say, make it hard for the minister, and the deacons, and the church to remain in their wretched condition of lukewarmness. I hope you will be the means of arousing them, and bringing them nearer to Christ. How often a place which appears undesirable will become desirable if we regard it in this light. Providence puts us where we can give the most light, and if our lamp is set up in the midst of darkness, where else should it be? This Tabernacle reminds me of those frames on wheels, filled with lamps, which are used at our railway stations ; here we have scores of lamps all burning together, and when first one and then another is dropped through the roof into a carriage and whisked away along the line, though it be to Australia, or America, or India, I am sorry to lose you, but I am glad that you are going where you will do more good than you will do here. Why should you not be scattered abroad like the first believers? Why should not the candles be carried where the darkness is? Why should we keep up an everlasting illumination upon this particular spot, just to gladden our own eyes, instead of lending light to all the world? It is ours to say to others, "There is a candle, let it shine in your houses" ; or, "Here is a lamp, set it up in your tents, that God may bless you thereby."

But though I have thus spoken of Providence, a good deal of our placing is in our own hands. There are ways of placing yourselves—for instance, that mentioned in the text, which may be as ruinous to our influence as if a candle were placed under a bushel ; or you can put yourself in a place of advantage, as when a lamp is set upon a lamp-stand.

First, note the word in *the negative*—"Neither do men place it under a bushel." A bushel is a good and useful article. In almost every eastern house there was a corn-measure, here called a bushel, though it did not generally measure much more than a peck ; this measure was commonly in every house, because they ground their own corn, and so were generally dealing with the neighbours. That useful corn-measure to me represents the pursuits of ordinary life—the proper and natural

avocations of the household. Many men and women hide the candle that God has lit under the busbel of business and domestic cares. But you ask, Is not a housewife to be a housewife? Certainly; but not so a housewife as to conceal her godliness. Is not the labouring man to work with his hands? Certainly, but not so to work for the bread that perisheth as to miss life eternal. Is not the man of business to give his best attention thereto? Of course he is, but he must see to it that he do not lose his own soul, or injure the souls of others. Keep your busbel; nobody asks you to burn it; but do keep it in its place. Subordinate all worldly things to the glory of God. Suffer not your possessions or your desires, your pleasures or your cares to act as a busbel hiding his light. This happens with a great many. I must ask conscience to be so kind as to preach for me for a minute or two. Will you look at home, dear friends, and see where you place your business and your religion? Which is uppermost? Which is foremost? Is religion your business, or is business your religion? Does your candle shine upon the busbel, or does the busbel hide the candle? I will not dwell upon the question, because it will be well for you to answer it in quiet, each man for himself. I know how a minister can put his light under a busbel—he can be a mere official and perform service, being nothing more than a performer. The worst thing to do with the gospel is to *parsonificate* it. As soon as we preach as mere officials we have lost all power: we must speak as men to men. A brother minister one day said to me, "The moment I shut the pulpit door I shut out my natural self." This will never do: a man must be all there when he is serving God, and if ever he is himself it must be in preaching. We can also cover the candle by using hard words, words which are not hard to educated people, but to the bulk of our hearers. We can also use technical creed words, such as we might use in the class room or in the discussion hall, and these may conceal our meaning from the people. I know some Christians who put their light under a busbel by being excessively bashful, and shamefaced. They are not so dreadfully retiring when five-pound notes are to be made; but if anything is to be said for Christ then they blush and stammer. Oh that they could overcome this hindrance. Others put their light under a busbel by inconsistency: they do not act as Christians should act, and when people see their bad works they do not glorify God. God forbid that in the house our darkness should be more conspicuous than our light. Some, I fear, cover their light under the busbel of indifference: they do not seem to care how things go with the cause and kingdom of Christ. They look well to the state of their flocks and herds, but for the house of the Lord they have small concern. I pray you, dear friends, do not hide your light in any way. Let not your lawful callings, your relationships, your sicknesses, your literary pursuits, or your personal sorrows become so exaggerated as to conceal the divine light within your soul.

The text is, however, *positive*. Put yourself on a candlestick or on a lampstand. What must that be? A candlestick is an appropriate exhibitor of the light; and each man should make an appropriate confession of his faith. The best way is prescribed in God's word. It is written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Take care that when you have faith you declare it in the ordained manner; for

he that with his heart believeth and with his mouth maketh confession of him shall be saved. O lamp, do not say, "I will shine, but I will lie upon the floor and do it." No, your place is on the stand which is provided. Dear Christian friend, join the church that you may be placed where you will be in order with the arrangements of the divine household. A lamp-stand should also be something which makes the lamp sufficiently visible. If you do not come out and diffuse your light willingly and cheerfully it is very likely the master of the house will fetch you out. Providence will arrange that the light shall not be hidden. See what the Lord did for his church years ago; he allowed her to be persecuted into publicity. What a lamp-stand was found for Christianity in the martyrdoms of the Colosseum, in the public burnings by pagans and papists, and in all the other modes by which believers in Christ were forced into fame. When there was no printing-press, when there were scanty opportunities of making the gospel public compared with those of to-day, the Lord caused his witnesses to stand before rulers and kings, and there publish in the most public places the word of his salvation. Persecution built the lighthouse, and the divine love set up aloft the burning and shining light of sacred truth. You may find that God will make such a candlestick for you. You shall be forced into testimony in your family by the opposition of those about you, unless you take other and happier methods. We ought to be valiant for the truth, and speak of it with all prudence, but without stint.

I long for the day when the precepts of the Christian religion shall be the rule among all classes of men, in all transactions. I often hear it said "Do not bring religion into politics." This is precisely where it ought to be brought, and set there in the face of all men as on a candlestick. I would have the Cabinet and the Members of Parliament do the work of the nation as before the Lord, and I would have the nation, either in making war or peace, consider the matter by the light of righteousness. We are to deal with other nations about this or that upon the principles of the New Testament. I thank God that I have lived to see the attempt made in one or two instances, and I pray that the principle may become dominant and permanent. We have had enough of clever men without conscience, let us now see what honest, God-fearing men will do. But we are told that we must study "British interests," as if it were not always to a nation's truest interest to do righteousness. "But we must follow out our policy." I say, No! Let the policies which are founded on wrong be cast like idols to the moles and to the bats. Stand to that most admirable of policies,— "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." Whether we are kings, or queens, or prime ministers, or members of parliament, or crossing sweepers, this is our rule if we are Christians.

Yes, and bring religion into your business, and let the light shine in the factory and in the counting-house. Then we shall not have quite so much china clay in the calicoes wherewith to cheat the foreigner, nor shall we see cheap and nasty articles described as of best quality, nor any other of the dodges in trade that everybody seems to practise now-a-days. You tradespeople and manufacturers are very much one like the other in this: there are tricks in all trades, and one sees it everywhere. I believe everybody to be honest in all England, Scotland, and

Ireland until he is found out; but whether there are any so incorruptible that they will never be found wanting this deponent sayeth not, for I am not a judge.

Do not put your candle under a bushel, but let it shine, for it was intended that it should be seen. Religion ought to be as much seen at our own table as at the Lord's table. Godliness should as much influence the House of Commons as the Assembly of Divines. God grant that the day may come when the mischievous division between secular and religious things shall no more be heard of, for in all things Christians are to glorify God, according to the precept, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

III. Our time has gone, but I must detain you a little while I speak upon the SHINING: "Let your light so shine before men."

When a candle shines it is because it cannot help it. Shining is the natural result of possessing light, and I want you, dear brethren, to exert a holy influence upon others, because the grace of God is really in you. Some men made desperate attempts to *appear* good; they would be far more successful if they would seek to *be* good. Grace must be in a man as a living fountain, and then rivers of living water will flow from him. The natural result of a renewed heart is a renewed life, and the natural result of a renewed life is that men see it and glorify God.

Shining, however, is not altogether a thing of necessity so as to forbid our attention to it, for the text demands care of us. "Let your light so shine." I must ask the printer to put the two letters—s, o,—in very large capitals. "Let your light SO shine—let it so shine that men may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." You will not shine in the best manner though you may have grace in your heart unless you abound in prayerful, watchful, earnest care. You must guard heart and lip and hand, or your light will not *so* shine before men as could be desired. Your light will need trimming. Neglect it not.

The shining which comes from the Christian is here described as "good works." Good talk is very well, but it takes a great deal of talk to light a room. Good works are the *splendour* of the light of God. What works are good works? I would answer—upright actions, honest dealings, sincere behaviour. When a man is scrupulously true, and sternly faithful, all right-minded persons admit that his works are good works. Good works are works of love, unselfish works, works done for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Deeds of charity, kindness, and brotherly love are good works. As also careful attendance to duty, and all service honestly done, together with all courses which promote the moral and spiritual good of our fellow-men. Works of devotion in which you prove that you love God and his Christ, that you love the gospel, that you desire to spread the kingdom of Christ,—these may not be so highly valued by ordinary people, but are eminently good works. Let these good and true things abound in you, and shine out from you; do them not out of ostentation, but still without shame.

Good works, like the shining of a candle, have good effects. A candle cheers the gloom. What a comfort it is when you have long been wandering in the dark to spy out a twinkling candle in a cottage window! A candle directs and guides men, and by its illumination it instructs them. In its light they see, discern, and discover. He who acts teaches.

The man who lives Christianity preaches it. He is the truest evangelist whose life brings glory to God and goodwill to men.

But note, it is said "it giveth light to all that are *in the house*"; so that when we are lit from on high we are first to shine at home. It is not abroad alone that we should make our Christianity known, but chiefly at the fireside, to those who are in the house. Some have a very little house, they live in a couple of rooms with a small family; let them take care that they have grace enough to make a few thoroughly happy, which is not always the easiest thing in the world. Others have a large family; may they have grace enough to influence the whole. A few have large workshops, and employ many hands, and these ought to exercise a holy influence over all their workfolks. Some of us are preachers of the gospel, and have a large house in which to shine: we shall need more of the oil of grace than others, that we may give light to the whole of our house; and that grace is to be had. The whole world is a house in which the church is the candle; and, therefore, the members of the church should so shine, each one in his place, that the whole world shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God.

The text says that the candle gives light to *all* that are in the house. Some professors give light only to a part of the house. I have known women very good to all but their husbands, and these they nag from morning to night, so that they give no light to them. I have known husbands so often out at meetings that they neglect home, and thus their wives miss the light. I have known masters who are utterly indifferent about their servants; and mistresses who quite forget to seek the good of their maids. If our light be in good order it will illuminate the parlour and the kitchen, the drawing room and the scullery, shining upon all that are in the house. Candles do not shed all their light either that way or this, but they shine in all directions. A Christian should be an all round man, blessing all, both great and small, who come in contact with him.

The object of our shining is not that men may see how good we are, nor even see us at all, but that they may see grace in us and God in us, and cry, "What a Father these people must have." Is not this the first time in the New Testament that God is called our Father? Is it not singular that the first time it peeps out should be when men are seeing the good works of his children? The Fatherhood of God is best seen in the holiness of saints. When men see that light is good they bless the source of that light, and seeing that it cometh from the Father of lights, they glorify his name.

I have had to hasten over all this, but I pray God to make it none the less effectual for the stirring up of every Christian here to use all the light he has. It is a dark world, and it seems to get darker, for the emissaries of Satan are going about thirsting to quench every light. Look ye well to your lamps—look ye well to your lamps, ye virgin souls. Trim well the flame, and go you forth even into the black night to meet the Bridegroom. Lift high your torches into the very face of darkness, and make men see that God the Father is still in the midst of his people.

The venerable Bede, when he was interpreting this text, said that Christ Jesus brought the light of Deity into the poor lantern of our

humanity, and then set it upon the candlestick of his church that the whole house of the world might be lit up thereby. So indeed it is. The reason why there is light in the church is that those who are in the dark may see. Churches do not exist for themselves, but for the world at large. Have ye thought of this, ye professors? Ye are blessed that ye may be a blessing. Take heed that ye behave aright. You go to Christ's wedding feast, and you are glad to hear that he turneth water into wine, and you are ready to bless him that he has kept the best wine until now. But oh, ye servants of God, remember what is said, "Draw out now and bear." These are your orders. There is the God-made wine—"Draw out now, and bear." Receive from Christ's fulness, and distribute to others. Neglect not your duty as servitors at your Lord's great feast. Your Master has taken the bread, and has blessed and broken it, and then he has given it to you. Is that the end of the process? Do you stand there and munch your own personal morsel with a miserable self-satisfaction? Nay, if you be indeed disciples of Christ you will remember that the next words are, "and the disciples to the multitude, and they did eat." Break then your bread among the hungry that surround you. Take the whole loaf of Christ, and rightly divide and distribute it, and you shall have as much left as at the first; yea, more, you shall gather of the fragments many baskets full. Only see ye to it that ye freely give what ye have freely received, lest hoarded manna breed corruption, lest a canker come upon your hoarded gold and silver, and lest your very souls grow mouldy even to reeking rottenness before God, because you have not drawn out your souls unto the hungry, nor sought to teach those who are perishing for lack of knowledge.

The Baptist Missionary Society will enable you to teach the heathen. Take a share in it. There, make the collection! Do your best!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—136 (Song I.), 652,
22 (Part III.)

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 12TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”—Psalm xxiii. 4.

Do you know I had laid this text by? I meant that this choice promise should be kept in store and stock till I came near the river of Jordan, and I hoped that then, in my last hours, I might be privileged to enjoy its sweetness, and sing with joyful lips—

“Yea, though I walk through death’s dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill ;
For thou art with me, and thy rod
And staff me comfort still.”

The other day I found that I needed to eat this heavenly loaf at once, and I did so. Fathers tell their children, “You cannot eat your cake and have it too”; but this rule does not hold good of the consolations of God. You can enjoy a promise and have it still. Yes, and have it all the more because your faith has fed upon its fatness. I sucked the honey out of this verse some days ago when a tempest howled around me, but its sweetness is there still. I shall enjoy it, I doubt not, when I come near death’s gate; but I have had it already sealed to my own soul with richness and fulness of comfort by the blessed Spirit of our God. Would to God that every believer who is burdened and cast down might find it as precious to his own heart as I have found it to mine.

This verse is no doubt very applicable to the experience of a believer when he comes to die; but, for certain, that is not its only intent. It has an inexpressibly delightful application to the dying; but it is for the living, too; and at this time if, through any peculiar trials, your soul is cast down within you, and you are walking through the valley of death-shade, I pray you to repeat the words of the text, and may the Lord help you to feel that they are true,—“Yea, though (even now) I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” The words are not in the future tense, and therefore are not reserved for a

distant moment. Do not postpone to the future that which you so greatly need in the present. Though I walk, even at this hour, through the dark valley, thou, O Lord, art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. David was not dying; the psalm is full of happy, peaceful life. He is lying down in green pastures, and following his Lord by still waters; and if a cloud has descended upon him, and he feels himself like one threatened with death, he nevertheless expects goodness and mercy to follow him through all his days. The song is not to lie upon the shelf till our last day, but it is to be sung upon our stringed instruments all the days of our lives; therefore let us sing it at this hallowed hour in the courts of the Lord's house, and in the midst of them that love him.

I. I call your attention, first, to THE PASS AND ITS TERRORS—*"the valley of the shadow of death."* Get the idea of a narrow ravine, something like the Gorge of Gondo or some other stern pass upon the higher Alps where the rocks seem piled to heaven, and the sunlight is seen above as through a narrow rift. Troubles are sometimes heaped on one another, pile on pile, and the road is a dreary defile through which the pilgrim on his journey to heaven has to wend his way. Set before your mind's eye a valley shut in with stupendous rocks that seem to meet at a narrowing defile, dark as midnight itself. Through this valley, or ravine, the heavenly footman has to follow the path appointed for him in eternal purpose of the Infinite mind. Through such a dreary rift many a child of God is making his way at this moment, and to him I speak.

Our first observation about it is that it is *'exceedingly gloomy'*. This is its chief characteristic. It is the *'y'* of the shadow—the shadow of death. Death is terrible, and the shadow of it is cold and chill, and freezes to the marrow. I have sterner rocks which have not merely cooled me, but have cast around me a dreadfully damp chill, as though the embrace of death had been about me, its cold within me. One hastens to escape from such a deadly shade, which has tended to strike you with fever. And such it seems to me is shade cast by the wing of death when the man feels that he is under a trouble of soul that he cannot live, and would not even wish to do *she* could. The joy of life has been like the sun under an eclipse; in the chill, dark, damp shade of a terrible sorrow the man has cowered down, and beneath the icy touch of doubt has shivered, has felt fevered, frightened, and has been as one out of his mind. I speak to some of your hearts here who, I hope, know nothing about this gloom. Do not want to know it. Keep bright while you can. Sing while you may. Be larks and mount aloft, and sing as you mount; but there are some of God's people who are not much in the lark line; they are a great deal more like owls. They sit alone and keep silence; or if they do open their mouths it is to give forth a discontented hoot. Companions of dragons, a very suitable sympathy we can afford them. Even those who are bright and cheerful do, many of them, occasionally pass through the dreary glen where everything is doleful; and their spirits sink below zero. I know that wise brethren say, "You should not give way to feelings of depression. Quite right, But we do; and perchance when our brain is as

weary as ours you will not bear yourselves more bravely than we do. "But desponding people are very much to be blamed." I know they are, but they are also very much to be pitied; and, perhaps, if those who blame quite so furiously could once know what depression is, they would think it cruel to scatter blame where comfort is needed. There are experiences of the children of God which are full of spiritual darkness; and I am almost persuaded that those of God's servants who have been most highly favoured have, nevertheless, suffered more times of darkness than others. The covenant is never known to Abraham so well as when a horror of great darkness comes over him, and then he sees the shining lamp moving between the pieces of the sacrifice. A greater than Abraham was early led of the Spirit into the wilderness, and yet again ere he closed his life he was sorrowful and very heavy in the garden. In this heaviness, for which there is a needs be, believers have a black foil which sets out the brightness of eternal love and faithfulness. Blessed be God for mountains of joy, and valleys of peace, and gardens of delight; but there is a Vale of Death-shade, and most of us have traversed its tremendous glooms.

Moreover, there are parts of human life which are *dangerous* as well as gloomy. In journeying through the passes of the East an escort is usually needed, for the robber lurks among the rocks, and shoots down upon the traveller, or blocks up his way with sword and spear. The name of the Khyber Pass is still terrible in our memories, and there are Khybers in most men's lives. There are points in human history that are specially dangerous. Oh, you that are beginners, I do not wish to frighten you; I do not want to tell you that the ways of wisdom are terrible, for they are not. No, "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." But, for all that, there are enemies on the road to heaven; and there are "Cut-throat Lanes" where, when the enemy finds your spirits cast down, he pounces upon you unawares with temptation, and before you know it you may be wounded and sore grieved. There are spots in the valley of deathshade where every bush conceals an adversary, where temptations spring out of the very ground like the fiery serpents from amongst the desert sand, where the soul is among lions, even among them that are set on fire of hell. If you have not yet come to that part of your pilgrimage I am glad of it, and I hope that you may be spared it, in answer to that needful prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." But if you are called to walk through this dangerous ravine, what will you do? Why, say this—Yea, though I walk through that dangerous pass of which I have heard, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Recollect that a Christian man is never so much in danger from abundance of temptation as from the carnal security of his own heart. We are often most in jeopardy when we are not tempted; and the worst devil in the world may be no devil at all. "Deliver me," said a man of great experience, "from a sleeping devil, for if he roars at me he keeps me awake; but when he lets me alone then my heart presumes that all is safe, and I am betrayed." You young people, or old people either, who are placed in the course of providence in positions of great trial and temptation, need not wish for an easier pathway, for it may be that you are safer now, being on your guard, than those who are

not fiercely tried, but sit at ease, and are in great peril from sloth and spiritual indifference. Better consume with fire than perish of dry rot. The cold mountains of trial are far safer than the sultry plains of pleasure. I am not, therefore, alarmed at manifest danger, neither would I have you greatly dismayed because there is a gloomy gorge between you and heaven.

One of the chief reasons of the gloom is the fact that this terrible pass is *shrouded in mystery*. You do not know what the sorrow is. The shadow,—the shadow of death: what meaneth it? You cannot discern the form which broods over you. You cannot grasp the foe. It is of no use drawing a sword against a shadow. Bunyan represents the pilgrim as putting up his sword when he came into the valley of the shadow of death. He had fought Apollyon with it, but when he came into the midnight of that horrible defile it was of no use to him. Everything was so veiled, magnified, and blackened in the dark. Hobgoblins, as he called them, hovered around, strange shapes and singular forms of doubts, which he could not meet with reasoning, or overcome with argument. A man can pluck up courage against a thing he knows; but an evil which he does not know unmans him. He does not know what the trial is, and yet a strange, joy-killing feeling is upon him. He cannot see the extent of his loss in business, but he fears that his all will go: he does not know the end of his child's illness, but death appears to be threatening. All is suspense and surmise; and the evil of evils is uncertainty. That which frightened Belshazzar when the handwriting was on the wall was, no doubt, that he could see the hand, but he could not see the arm and the body to which the hand belonged. It seemed so singular to see the mystic handwriting in letters of lightning, and no more. So, sometimes it seems to us as if we could not make out our condition,—could not understand God's dealings with us. We have seemed to be at cross purposes with providence. We have come to a place where two seas meet, and we cannot understand the current. Our temptation has been comparable to a cyclone, and we do not know which way the hurricane is sweeping; we are in the power of a whirlwind, jerked to and fro. Such things happen to God's people now and then. And what are they to do when they get into these perplexities, these mysterious troubles, that they cannot at all describe? They must do—and God help them to do—as this blessed man did, who in the peace and confidence of faith went on his way singing, Yea, though I walk through the valley shaded by the mysterious wings of death, and though I know nothing of my way, and cannot understand it, yet will I fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thou knowest the way that I take. There are no mysteries with my God. Thou hast the thread of this labyrinth, and thou wilt surely lead me through. Why, therefore, should I fear? Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Gloom, danger, mystery, these three all vanish when faith lights up her heavenly lamp, trimmed with the golden oil of the promise.

Nor is this all. The idea of *solitude* is in the text, the path is lonely, and the pilgrim sings, "Yea, though I walk,"—as if he walked alone, no one sharing his shadowed pathway. Solitude is a very great trial to some spirits; and some of us know a great deal of what it is, for we dwell alone, in a spiritual sense. But you will say, "Do

you not mingle with crowds?" Ay, and there is no solitude like it. When your office and position set you as on a mountain all alone, you will know what I mean. For the sheep there are many companions; but for the shepherd few. Those who watch for souls come into positions in which they are divided from all human help. Nobody knows your care, or can guess the burden of your soul, and those who try to sympathize with you fail in the generous attempt. Some of you, perhaps, are in a position in which you complain, "Nobody was ever tried as I am. I feel as if God had set me as a mark for his arrows." Or possibly you murmur, "There may be many more afflicted than I am, but none in my peculiar way. I suffer a singularity of trial." Just so; and that is an essential part of the bitterness of your cup, that you should lament that you are alone. But will you not say, with your divine Master, "You shall leave me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me"? Now is the time for faith. When you trust God *and a friend*, there is a question whether it is God you trust or the friend; but when the friend has left you, and only God is near, no question remains. If you and I are walking together, and a dog follows us, who knows which is the dog's master? But when you go off to the left and I turn to the right, all men will see which owns the dog, by seeing which he follows. If you can trust God alone, then are you really trusting him; and if, when creature streams run dry, you can stoop down to the Creator's overflowing well and drink there, then you are a believer, and there is no mistake about it. It is profitable to be driven into loneliness that we may prove whether we are solely trusting in God or not. It is a bad thing to be standing with one foot on the sea and the other on the land: an angel stood in that fashion, and it suits angels, but it is not a safe posture for such burdened beings as men and women. We must get both feet on the Rock of ages, or the foot which stands upon the sea of changeful self will be our downfall. My soul, wait thou only upon God! When faith's sole foundation is the power and faithfulness of the Lord she learns to glory in the absence of all visible help, and sings with joyful heart,—Yea, though I walk through death's dark valley, unattended by human companion, I will fear no evil, for my God is near.

Let me remark, further, that, though this valley is thus gloomy, dangerous, mysterious, and solitary, yet it is *often traversed*. Many more go by this road than some people dream. Among those who wear a cheerful countenance in public there are many who are well acquainted with this dreary glen; they have passed through it often, and may be in it now. When I wear the sackcloth of sorrow, I try to bind it about my loins under my outer garments, and not where all shall see it; for has not the Master said, "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast"? Why should we cast others down? There is enough sorrow in the world without our spreading the infection by publishing our troubles. Story books are sent me to review, and when I perceive that they contain harrowing tales of poverty, I make short work of them. I see quite enough of sorrow in real life, I do not need fiction to fret my heart. If men and women must write works of fiction at all, they might as well write cheerfully, and not break people's hearts over mere fabrications.

If I must weep, let it be over an actual grief, and not over a painted affliction. But so it is; some like to tell the story of their sorrows, and care little what may be the influence upon others; they might have a little more consideration for their fellow-men. If my own heart is bleeding why should I wound others? Sometimes it is brave to be speechless, even as the singer puts it—

“Bear and forbear, and silent be;
Tell no man thy misery.”

It is surely true that a great number of God's best servants have trodden the deeps of the valley of the shadow; and this ought to comfort some of you. The footsteps of the holy are in the valley of weeping. Saints have marched through the Via Dolorosa; see you not their footprints? Above all others, mark one footprint! Do you not see it? Stoop down and fix your gaze upon it! Go on your knees and view it! If you watch it well, you will observe the print of a nail-wound. As surely as this word of God is true, your Lord has felt the chill of the death-shade. There is no gloom of spirit, apart from the sin of it, into which Jesus has not fallen; there is no trouble of soul, or turmoil of heart, which is free from sin, which the Lord has not known. He says, “Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness.” The footprint of the Lord of life is set in the rock for ever, even in the valley of the shadow of death! Shall we not cheerfully advance to the cross and death of Jerusalem when Jesus goes before?

I shall close my remarks upon this Via Mala of terrors by showing that, dark and gloomy as it is, *it is not an unhallowed pathway*. No sin is necessarily connected with sorrow of heart, for Jesus Christ our Lord once said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” There was no sin in him, and consequently none in his deep depression. We have never known a joy or a sorrow altogether untainted with evil; but in grief itself there is no necessary cause of sin. A man may be as happy as all the birds in the air, and there may be no sin in his happiness; and a man may be exceeding heavy, and yet there may be no sin in the heaviness. I do not say that there is not sin in all our feelings, but still the feelings in themselves need not be sinful. I would, therefore, try to cheer any brother who is sad, for his sadness is not necessarily blameworthy. If his downcast spirit arises from unbelief, let him flog himself, and cry to God to be delivered from it; but if the soul is sighing, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” its being slain is not a fault. If the man cries, “My God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee,” his soul's being cast down within him is no sin. “If need be,” says the apostle, “ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.” Not only “if need be ye are in the temptations,” but “ye are in heaviness through them.” There is a needs-be for the heart-break, for it is in the heaviness of the spirit that the essence of the trial is found. Does not Solomon say, “The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil”? If the blow is not such as to leave its bruise, there has been no chastening that will do us good. Heaviness of spirit is not, therefore, on every occasion a matter for which we need condemn ourselves, though it will be well always to turn a severe side to one's self. However we may censure ourselves for heart-sorrow we must be

careful not to condemn others; for the way of sorrow is not the way of sin, but a hallowed road sanctified by the prayers of myriads of pilgrims now with God—pilgrims who, passing through the valley of Baca, made it a well, the rain also filled the pools: of such it is written, "they go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God."

Thus much upon the dark and dangerous valley of the shadow.

II. Our second head, upon which we shall speak for a little while, is **THE PILGRIM AND HIS PROGRESS**. "Yea, though *I walk through* the valley of the shadow of death."

The pilgrim, you observe, first, is *calm in the prospect of his dreary passage*. I do not think that it is one half so hard to bear a trouble as it is to think of it beforehand. The poet well said that many of us

"Feel a thousand deaths in fearing one."

The outriders of trouble are often of a fiercer countenance than the trouble itself. We suffer more in the dread of trial than in the endurance of the stroke. Here we have a man of faith who is calm in expectancy of ill: "I shall walk," says he, "through the valley of the shadow of death. I expect to do so, but I will fear no evil." Have you, my friend, a trouble evidently drawing near to you? Are there tokens of a storm all around you? Then look bravely at the future. Let not your heart fail you while waiting for the thunder and the hurricane. David said, "Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." Encamped enemies generally trouble us more than actually contending foes. When once the enemy raises the war-cry, and comes on, we are aroused to valour, and meet him foot to foot, but while he tarries and holds us in suspense our heart is apt to eat into itself with perplexity. We can see that our deadly foe is in his camp, but we do not know whether he will attack us at the middle watch of the night, or at the dawn of the day, or when his onslaught will be: this suspense distresses the soul; and hence the glory of a faith that can say—"Though I know that I shall soon suffer, yet in the prospect of it I am at rest. I fear no evil." Beloved, pray to be calm in the prospect of trial: it is half the battle. Is it not written of the believer, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord"?

Furthermore, the pilgrim is *steady in his progress*. "Yea, though *I walk through* the valley," says he. He does not run in haste: he walks quietly along. We are generally in a hurry to get our trouble over, like those who say, "If physic must be taken, let it be taken as soon as possible." There is a season for all things. Let us wait till the trouble comes from the hand of the Lord, for he will time it to the second. "There! I must know the worst of it," cries one, "I feel in such a horrible state of suspense that I must end it one way or another." But, my dear friend, faith is not in such a frightful bustle,—“He that believeth shall not make haste.” Faith is quick when it has to serve God, but it is patient when it has to wait for him. There is no flurry about the Psalmist, "Yea, though I walk," says he—quietly, calmly, steadily. The pace of the experienced man of God is a walk. Young people fly,

“they shall mount up with wings as eagles”; growing men “run and are not weary;” but when a man of God becomes a father in the church, and is endowed with abounding strength he walks and does not faint. Walking is the regulation pace for veteran soldiers of Christ; all the rest is for the raw recruits. So David in effect declares,—I shall walk through the valley of the shadow of death as quietly as I walk my garden in the evening, or go down the street about my business. My affliction does not unfit me for duty, I am not flurried and worried about it. May God give you, my dear brothers and sisters, this calm faith. I pray that he may give it to me, for I greatly need it. I have often confessed my want of it, and confessed it with shame and confusion of face, for I serve a blessed Master, and I ought never to fear, nor allow pain of body to produce trembling of heart. O sacred Comforter, shed abroad in my heart the peace of God.

The next point about the pilgrim’s progress is that he is *secure in his expectancy*. “Yea, though I walk *through the valley*.” There is a bright side to that word “through.” He expects to come out of the dreary pass to a brighter country. Just as the train of his life enters into the dark tunnel of tribulation, he says within himself, “I shall come out on the other side. It may be very dark, and I may go through the very bowels of the earth, but I am bound to come out on the other side.” So is it with every child of God. If his way to heaven should lie over the bottom of the sea, hard by the roots of the mountains where the earth with her bars is about him, he will traverse the road in perfect safety. Jonah’s road to heaven lay that way, and a special conveyance was started for him: “The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah.” I do not suppose there was ever any other fish of the sort. Naturalists cannot find such a whale, they say, nor need they look for it, for the Scripture says, “The Lord prepared a fish.” He knew how to make it to hold Jonah exactly, and the fish accommodated its passenger, and brought him right enough to shore. Providence makes special preparation for every tried saint. If you are God’s servant, and are called to very peculiar trial, some singular providence, the like of which you have never read of, shall certainly happen to you to illustrate in your case the divine goodness and faithfulness. Oh, if we had more faith! Oh, if we had more faith! Life would be happy, trial would be light. Brethren, is it not an easy thing to walk through a shadow? If you get up in the morning and saunter down the field, and the spiders have spun their cobwebs across the path in a thousand places, you brush them all away; and yet there is more strength in a cobweb than in a shadow. The Psalmist speaks without fear, for he regards his expected trials as walking through a shadow. Trials and troubles, if we have but faith, are mere shadows that cannot hinder us on our road to heaven. Sometimes God so overrules afflictions that they even help us on to glory; therefore let us walk on and never be afraid. Let us be sure that if we walk in at one end of the hollow way of affliction we shall walk out at the other. Who shall hinder us when God is with us?

The main point about this pilgrim and his progress is that he is *perfectly innocent of fear*. He says, “I shall *fear* no evil.” It is beautiful to see a child at perfect peace amid dangers which alarm all

those who are with him. I have read of a little boy who was on board a vessel that was being buffeted by the tempest, and everybody was distressed, knowing that the ship was in great peril. There was not a sailor on board, certainly not a passenger, who was not full of alarm. This boy, however, was perfectly happy, and was rather amused than alarmed by the tossing of the ship. They asked him why he was so happy at such a time. "Well," he said, "my father is the captain. He knows how to manage." He did not think it possible that the ship could go down while his father was in command. There was folly in such confidence, but there will be none in yours if you believe with an equally unqualified faith in your Father, who can and will bring safely into port every vessel that is committed to his charge. Rest in God and be quiet from fear of evil.

This pilgrim, while he is thus free from fear, is *not at all fanatical or ignorant*, since he gives a good reason for his freedom from alarm. "I will fear no evil," says he, "for thou art with me." Was there ever a better reason given under heaven for being fearless than this—that God is with us? He is on our side; he is pledged to help us; he has never failed us; he must cease to be what he is before he can cast away one soul that trusts him. Where, then, is there room for terror? The child is confident because his mother is with him; much more should we be serene in heart since the omniscient, the omnipotent, the immutable God is on our side. "Whom shall I fear?" Whom shall we select to honour with our dread? Is there anybody that we need to fear? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Christ has died, and risen again, and sits up yonder at the right hand of God our representative; who then can harm us? Let the heavens be dissolved, and the earth be melted with fervent heat, but let not the Christian's heart be moved: let him stand like the great mountains, whose foundations are confirmed for ever, for the Lord God will not forsake his people or break his covenant.

"I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." There is something more here than freedom from fear and a substantial reason for it, for the true believer *rejoices in exalted companionship*. "Thou art with me." Thou—thou—thou—the King of kings, before whom every seraph veils his face, abashed before the awful majesty of his Maker. "Thou art with me"—thou before whom the greatest of the great sink into utter insignificance—thou art with me. How brave that man ought to be who walks with the Lion of the tribe of Judah as his guard! What steady footsteps should that man take who treads upon a rock, and knows it. "Thou art with me." Trembling brother you would feel perfectly safe if you had your eyes opened to see the companies of angels that surround you. You would rejoice in your security if you saw horses of fire and chariots of fire encompassing you. But such defences are as nothing compared with those which are always around you. God is better than myriads of chariots. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels;" but the glory of it is that "God is among them as in Sinai." God is with every one of his children. We dwell in him, and he dwells in us. "I in them and they in me," says Christ. A vital, everlasting union exists between every believing soul and God, and

what cause can there be for fear? "Thou art with me." Oh for grace to be brave pilgrims, and to make steady progress with heavenly company as our glory and defence.

III. Now, I shall close with my third head, which is most evidently in the text—*THE SOUL AND ITS SHEPHERD*; for David says, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." You see the psalm is all about a shepherd and a soul that feels itself to be like a sheep.

The rod and staff, the tokens of shepherdry, are the comforts of the saints. What are the uses of the rod and staff?

Consider, first, that the rod was used for *numbering the sheep*. "Then shall the sheep pass again under the hand of him that telleth them." The shepherd holds his rod, and the sheep are counted as they pass under it. It is a very blessed thing when the soul can say, "The Lord counts me one of his. I am in the valley of the shadow of death, but I am one of the Lord's own purchased flock. I am in great sadness, but I am numbered with his redeemed." The good Shepherd keeps all his sheep, and he will preserve them in the gloomy valley. "The Lord knoweth them that are his," and the Lord will show himself strong on the behalf of his own. He says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." If he numbers me among his own, though the meanest of them and feeblest in faith, and lowest in grace, yet he will protect me. Since I can say, My Beloved is mine, and I am his, I am sure of every good thing. We need no better comfort, for when his disciples rejoiced because the devils were subject unto them, their Master said, "Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." If with his rod the Shepherd of Israel has pointed you out as his own, you may well be of good cheer, for the Lord will not lose one part of his portion, nor suffer the enemy to devour one of his flock.

Next, the rod is used *for rule*. The shepherd's crook, which is now put into the hand of a bishop to show that he ought to be a shepherd, is the emblem of power and government. The shepherd is not only the keeper but the lord of the sheep. Remember that your Saviour is your Sovereign. Ye call him Master and Lord, and ye say well. Do you feel the spirit of obedience? I trust I do, for I long to serve him. I am not what I ought to be nor what I want to be, but my heart longs to obey his will. I accept his law to be my law, and I wish always to be one of his most loyal subjects. I delight to think that the Lord reigneth. It is a part of my song—"The Lord is king." My heart shouts it. I would proclaim it at the market-cross of every town. Let Jesus Christ reign, and reign for ever and ever. The joy is that he does reign. His rod and staff are the emblems of the Shepherd-King, and as we submit to his supreme sway we find a comfort in his royal power and dignity.

A third meaning—for the words are very full of doctrine—is this: the rod and staff are meant *for guidance*. It is with his rod that the shepherd leads his flock. It is most sweet, most comfortable to believe that the Lord is guiding us. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." We are not half awake as the sheep of Christ; but if we were to watch our Lord we should see him gently leading us by a right way. When we are not wilful, but wait upon

him, he leads us on in a way which we should not have chosen of our own accord, but it is the safe and right way. When we do not know which road to take we are not left to make a foolish choice, but we hear a voice behind us saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." It is a blessed thing when we are in a troubled condition to be quite confident that the Lord himself brought us there, for then we are sure that the road must be right, since our Shepherd never misleads his flock. If we follow where Jesus leads, the guide is responsible for the road.

The next meaning of the rod and staff is that of *urging onward*. The sheep sometimes are lazy, and will not stir; and then the shepherd pushes them on a bit with his rod and staff. Have you ever felt the divine arousings? Perhaps under a sermon you have had a pretty sharp thrust. I know I have had to lay on the rod at times in the Master's name upon certain fat sheep who are not quite as nimble as they ought to be; but their wool is so thick that I can scarcely make them feel. The Great Shepherd knows how to touch them. He can give such a push when sheep are lingering behind that, on a sudden, you see them leap forward, and you wonder how it is that they go to the front so eager. If I am under a trouble, and I feel that it speeds me on in the right road, if it drives me to prayer, if it makes me honour God more, then the rod and staff comfort me. It is a happy thing to be afflicted towards heaven. It is an evil thing to be comfortable in doing nothing—a horrible thing to be sinking into indifference, and not to care whether you get out of it or not, but it is good to be tried, and so made earnest for more grace. It comforts a wise man to perceive that the rod is working for his good.

The rod and staff mean *chastisement*; for if a sheep goes astray the shepherd pulls it back by the leg with his crook, and makes it feel that it cannot wander without suffering for it. So does the Lord chasten us. Blessed be his name for chastening; though it is not joyous but grievous, "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby." Oh, how blessed are those words "nevertheless afterward." It is a condescending thing for God to take enough notice of you to chasten you. A man does not whip other people's children, and when God afflicts a believer, and his soul within him is broken down, let him say within himself, "Blessed be God for this tribulation! Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Sweet is the pain that seals the Father's love! Blessed is the anguish caused by our Shepherd's hand! Oh, dreadful pleasure that would arise out of God's letting me alone, let me never taste it; but blessed grief, blessed heartbreak, which assures me that God has not forgotten me. O Lord, thy rod when it chastens me doth comfort me.

But, last of all, the rod and the staff are used by the shepherd to *protect his flock*. With these he contends against the beasts of the field that the lambs may not be torn. And, oh, how glorious is Christ when he comes forth with the weapons of his eternal power to fight the lion that would rend our soul! Think of him in heaven pleading for his people, pleading the merits of his blood, using his intercession as a staff with which he smites the wolf, and chases away the lion and the bear, that no one of us may be destroyed. He must, he will protect his own elect.

You may think that Christ bought his people with his blood and that he will lose them, but I do not believe it. When a thing has cost you dear you take great care of it, and if it cost you your life, you would not readily part with it. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life," and when he has once given up his life, that which he hath purchased with it is dearer to him than all the world. Christ would sooner lose his life than lose his people. He did die once to save them, and until he dies again they shall never perish. Hath he not said it himself, "Because I live ye shall live also"? Unless they live he does not live. His life has entered into them, and it can never leave them. "I give," saith he, "unto my sheep eternal life"; and what can "eternal life" mean but a life which lasts on for ever?

Oh, may God give to everyone here present the faith which I have been talking about. Perhaps some of you have never trusted your souls with Christ. You know that faith is the way of salvation, why do you not follow it? Simply trust him; simply trust him; simply trust him *now*. It is wonderful the power of faith to change the heart. When you trust a man you love him. You cannot be an enemy to a man in whom you trust. The effect of faith upon the affections is marvellous; it changes their whole nature and bent. God give you to know Christ, for they that know his name will put their trust in him; and when you know him and trust him then shall you confess with us unto the Lord, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee." God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms xxiii. and xxv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (Ver. I.), 36 (Song II.)
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HEARKEN AND LOOK; OR, ENCOURAGEMENT FOR BELIEVERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT EXETER HALL.

(The Annual Sermon on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society.)

"Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."—Isaiah li. 2, 3.

THE second verse contains my actual text. It is the argument by which faith is led to look for the blessings promised in the third verse.

It is habitual with some persons to spy out the dark side of every question or fact: they fix their eyes upon the "waste places," and they study them till they know every ruin, and are familiar with the dragons and the owls. They sigh most dolorously that the former times were better than these, and that we have fallen upon most degenerate days. They speak of "shooting Niagara," and of all sorts of frightful things. I am afraid that a measure of this tendency to write bitter things dwells in almost all of us at this present season, for certain discouraging facts which cannot be ignored are pressing heavily upon men's spirits. The habit of looking continually towards the wildernesses is injurious because it greatly discourages; and anything that discourages an earnest worker is a serious leakage for his strength. Perhaps a worse result than honest discouragement comes of depressing views, for they often afford an apology for indifference and inaction. The smallest peg suffices to hang an excuse upon when we are anxious to escape from the stern service of faith. "I pray thee have me excused," is a request which was supported in the parable by the flimsiest of pretences, and discouragement makes one of the same sort. The sluggard's argument is on this wise,—"I will not attempt the work, for it is far too heavy for my poor strength. I fear the times are ill adapted to any special effort; indeed, I am not quite certain that success will ever attend the general work." It is therefore a dreadful thing when the Christian church begins to be discouraged, and means must be used to stay the evil.

No. 1,596.

Such means we would use this day. Lo, we lift the standard of the divine promise. "Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people," sounds out like a silver trumpet in the front of the host. Be encouraged, O ye of the faint heart; there are no more difficulties now than there were of old. The cause is no more in jeopardy than it was a thousand years ago. The result, the end, the consummation of all things is absolutely certain: it is in his hand who cannot fail, therefore be of good courage, and in waiting upon the Lord renew your strength.

Remember, ye that are cast down, that there are other voices besides those of the bittern and owl from the "waste places." My text has near to it twice, nay, three times, "HEARKEN TO ME." You have listened long enough to dreary suggestions from within, to gloomy prophecies from desponding friends, to the taunts of foes, and to the horrible whisperings of Satan: now hearken to him who promises to make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord.

O ye whose eyes are quick to discover evil, there are other sights in the world besides waste places and deserts, and hence my text hath near to it twice over the exhortation, "LOOK"—"Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn"; "Look unto Abraham your father." Why should your eyes for ever ache over desolations? Probably you have seen as much in the wilderness as you are ever likely to see there. It does not take long to discover all the treasures and comforts of the burning sand; you have probably discovered them all by now. As for the discomforts and wants of the desert, you are perhaps as well acquainted with them as you need to be. Gaze no longer at the thirsty land and the burning sky; turn your eye where the finger of the Lord points by his word. If we enquire what it is that the Lord would have us observe, he answers, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you"; for there we may find comfort. O for the presence of the Holy Spirit, that the word may be full of the dew of heaven to refresh our souls.

I. We shall first look towards Abraham that we may see in him **THE ORIGINAL OF GOD'S ANCIENT PEOPLE**, the foundation stone, as it were, of the dispensation by which God blessed the former ages. In Judah was God known, his name was great in Israel: let us look to the rock whence Israel and Judah were hewn.

We observe, first, that the founder of God's first people was *called out of a heathen family*. "Your fathers," says Joshua, "dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and they served other gods." Abraham, the founder of the great system in which God was pleased to reveal himself for so long a time, and to whose seed the oracles of God were committed, was a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, the city of the moon-god. We cannot tell to what extent he was actually engrossed in the superstition of his fathers, but it is certain that the family was years afterwards tainted with idolatry; for in Jacob's day the teraph was still venerated, and Rachel stole her father's images. Abraham, therefore, was called out from the place of his birth, and from the household to which he belonged, that in a separated condition, as a worshipper of the one God, he might keep the truth alive in the world. Recollect, then, that the first man from whom sprang that wondrous nation which God hath not even yet cast away was

originally himself an idolater, and had to be called out of his sinful state by effectual grace. Why, then, might not the Lord, if the cause of truth were this day reduced to its utmost extremity, again raise up a church out of one man? If an almost universal apostasy should hide the divine light, could he not kindle a torch among the heathen, and by its light illuminate the earth again? He could call out another Abraham, and bless him and increase him, and achieve the whole of his eternal purposes if all of us should sleep in the dust, and the visibly organized church of to-day should pass away as the snow of winter at the advent of spring. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is he not able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham? As to anything like discouragement, it ought to vanish at the thought that not only out of your Sunday-schools, your colleges, and your pulpits can God raise up leaders for his church, but he can find them in the very centre of heathenism. Where Satan's seat is, even there can the Lord raise up advocates for his cause. The thick darkness of superstition shall not prevent the chosen one from seeing the light, neither shall the bondage of sin hold back the captive from finding freedom and proclaiming it to others.

"Ah," you say, "but men are not called now, as Abraham was, by miraculous calls from heaven." I reply,—The statement may be true; but God's visible means of calling men are now so many that there can seldom be need of miracle. The Lord can by his Spirit make one of the millions of Bibles scattered over the world to be as powerful a means of call as though he had sent an angel from heaven; yea, a solitary leaf of a printed tract, if wafted by the wind, or carried by the wave, may be borne where God shall bless it to the calling forth of a champion ordained of old to do great exploits. Where ordinary means are so plentiful wisdom resorts not to signs and wonders. Miracles were of admirable use while they were necessary; but now that they are no longer required the prudence of God forbids an extravagant display of the supernatural. Now that the word of God is scattered "thick as leaves in Valambrosa" everywhere by willing and ready hands, what need can there be of voices of the day or visions of the night? The same Spirit who called Abraham by a supernatural voice can call others by the word of truth. Instead of regarding it as a prodigy that a man should be unexpectedly called out from among the heathen I look for it, and shall not be surprised to hear that in the remoter provinces of China, or in the centre of Thibet, or in the recesses of Africa men have been raised up to found churches for our Lord Jesus. God can through the printed page or by hints and rumours passed from hand to hand convey enough instruction to call out more Abrahams and bless them, and increase his kingdom by them. "Omnipotence hath servants everywhere." Let us never dream that the God of Abraham is short of means for calling out chosen men to build up his church. Surely Christian people should never doubt the power of God to raise up lights in dark places when we remember that the greatest preacher of the gospel, namely, the apostle Paul, was drafted into the army of Christ from the ranks of his direst foes. The proud Pharisee, a fanatic of the fanatics, embittered against Christ, and persecuting his people, became the earnest advocate of Christ Jesus. Aforetime

his breath was threatening and slaughter, yet on the road to Damascus he was conquered and transformed. As a lion roareth over his prey, so did Paul rejoice that the saints in Damascus were now in his power; but the Lord struck him down, and turned the lion to a lamb, and henceforth where sin abounded grace did much more abound. First in the ranks of Christian heroes stands the man who called himself the chief of sinners because he persecuted the church of God. My brethren, as Luther came from among the monks, so out of Rome, yea, from the Vatican itself, can God, if he wills, call another Luther. The darkness of the times cannot forbid it, for God is light. The weakness of the church cannot hinder it, for all power belongeth unto God. There may not be among us to-day one whom God will so greatly honour as to make him a spiritual father of nations; but there may be such a one in the courts of Whitechapel or in the rookeries of St. Giles. The Christ, who was himself called the Galilean, despises no place or people. Our king is not particular as to the mine from which he digs his gold. The great seeker of precious souls full often finds his purest pearls in the deepest and the blackest waters. Take this, then, for encouragement, ye who tremble for the ark of God: he can build up a spiritual house for himself out of dark quarries, and find cedars for his temple in forests untraversed by the feet of missionaries.

"Ah," say you, "but Abraham was naturally a man of noble mould. Where do you find such a princely spirit as his?" I answer, Who made him? He that made him can make another like him. There is a grace of God which goes before what we are accustomed to call saving grace: I mean a grace of God which, in the creating of the nature, makes it a fit instrument for the grace which is after to be bestowed. By such sovereign favour one man is from his birth endowed with a superior mind and character, being adorned, even as a natural man, with much that is excellent in its own order. How often do you see among certain men of the world a generosity, honesty, open-heartedness, and nobility of disposition which are not grace, but which mark men out as fit to be leaders in all that is good when grace calls them into the divine service? The Lord can just as soon make a man after the type of Abraham as after any other type; and doubtless he has such in store even now, to whom his call will yet come. We may expect to see men of strong convictions converted into believers who "stagger not at the promise through unbelief." From among priests and pagans we may hope that the Lord will raise up pillars for his church. Is not this hope encouraged in your breasts as you "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you"?

Look again and observe that *Abraham was but one man*. Do not be startled at the sound which seems to have such terrors for certain brethren. I have heard the cant of those who object to a "one-man ministry," a ministry to which all the while they usually submit in their own meetings; but to my ear there is music, and not terror, in the term "a one-man ministry." I bless God that all my hope of salvation hangs upon the divine ministry of the One Man. Is not Christ, as the servant of God, the very pattern of all ministries which are of God? Working out the Father's eternal purpose by a life which was necessarily unique in many points, he trod the wine-press alone; in this, however.

he causes many of his people to have fellowship with him, even as in the case of Paul, who says, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." I am bold also to say that the Lord has as a rule wrought more nobly by one man than by bands and corporations of men. He in whose seed all nations are blessed was but one. "I called him," saith he, "alone, and blessed him, and increased him." Nor is this a solitary instance. When the earth was utterly corrupt God conserved the race by a solitary preacher of righteousness, who prepared an ark for the saving of his house. See how one Joseph saved whole nations from famine, and one Moses brought out a race from bondage. Who was there to keep Israel right when Moses fell on sleep but the one man Joshua? What were the prosperous times in the era of the Judges but days when one man was to the front as a leader? When all the rest hid away in dens and caves, some Barak or Gideon, or Jephthah, or Samson came boldly forward and delivered Israel. One man, standing like a figure at the head of many ciphers, soon headed victorious thousands, through faith in God. What was there but one man in the days of David? The Philistines had still triumphed over the land if the one lad had not brought back Goliath's head, and if the one man had not again and again smitten the uncircumcised in the name of the Lord. Beloved, if we should ever be reduced, as we shall not be, to one man, yet by one man will God preserve his church, and work out his great purposes. I hope we shall never go into our chamber, and shut to the door, and cry with Elias, "I only am left, and they seek my life!" No, my brother, there are more faithful men in this world than you. The Lord has yet reserved to himself his thousands that have not bowed the knee to Baal. We are this day, not one man, but many, and we all desire to live for the glory of God, and for the spread of his gospel; but if our hosts were so diminished that we could be numbered by a little child upon his fingers, still there would be no excuse for dismay, for the God of Abraham still liveth, even he who created a people to his praise by one man, of whom he says, "I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him."

Think, my brethren, of the power for good or evil which may be enshrined in a single human life. What mischievous results may come of one man! One sinner destroyeth much good, and if there were but one person left who had knowledge of the ways of vice and the words of blasphemy that one man would suffice to infect the race with his abominations. If evil be so mighty, is not good with God in it quite as powerful? We may rightly measure quantities in reference to many things, but with others it is absurd. It would be ridiculous to measure the power of fire by the quantity which burns on your hearth. Give us fit materials and a single match, and you shall see what fire can do. If ordinary fire, that may so readily be extinguished, is thus powerful, who shall venture to measure the power of the fire from heaven, which neither men nor devils can quench, the fire which fell at Pentecost, and burns among us still. Ye carry fire, ye servants of God; ye work with a heaven-sent force of boundless energy. Why, therefore, should you despair? If all the lights in the world were put out except a solitary lamp, there is enough fire in one wick to kindle all the lamps in the universe. What inch of ground remains for despair to stand upon?

Furthermore, we are bound to notice that *this one man was a lone man*. He had not only to do the work of God, but he had nobody to help him. "I called him alone." True, he was attended by Lot—a poor miserable lot he was, costing his noble uncle more trouble than he ever brought him profit. How little did he maintain or adorn the righteousness which, nevertheless, had saved him: true type of many a feeble professor in these days. Abraham was not backed by any society when he crossed the Euphrates and afterwards traversed the desert to sojourn in Canaan as a pilgrim and a stranger. If ever man was fairly cut adrift and cast upon the Lord it was the great father of the faithful. He certainly found no patronage in his onward course save the all-sufficient patronage of the Lord his God. When he came near to kings it was a source of trouble to him; it led to contention, and once to war; or else he felt bound to refuse their offers of gifts, and say as he did to the king of Sodom, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich." That same boastful sentence might be uttered by the State concerning some churches that I know of, but not concerning us: may God preserve us, my brethren, from every desire to come under obligations to earthly sovereignties, lest, becoming indebted to them, we should be bound to render suit and service at their bidding, such service being already due to "another king, one Jesus."

Abraham had no prestige of parentage, rank, or title. If you had looked at the stately patriarch when he trod the plains of Mamre you would have seen about him a presence, a calm dignity, a truly regal manner; but that came to him solely through his faith in God and his communion with heaven. Abraham was distinguished from other men only by the grace of God. What grander difference can there be than that which is established by the existence of faith in the heart? Thus Abraham was in the fullest sense a lone man, unsupported by any of those outward distinctions which enable some men to do more than others.

The fulfilment of his calling rested on his loneliness; for he must get away from his kindred, and wander up and down with his flocks, even as the church of God now does, dwelling in a strange land, and feeding her flock apart. When he was alone God blessed Abraham,—“I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.” The blessing did not come to him in Charran while he still had some connection with the old stock; he was not yet become thoroughly nonconformist, but held in some small degree to the old house at home, and till the last link was snapped the blessing could not come. And now, my brother, if in the town or district where you live you seem to lose all your helpers; if they die one by one, and it seems as if nobody would be left to you; if even the prayer-meeting fails for want of earnest, pleading men, still persevere, for it is the lone man that God will bless. “He setteth the solitary in families.” In your present forlorn condition you are learning sympathy with that lone man in Gethsemane, with that lone man upon the cross, who there vanquished all your foes. Remember that your enemies are thus beaten before you encounter them, and therefore you may readily overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Oh, be not afraid. Thus saith the Lord—“I called him alone, and blessed him,

and increased him." Grasp that, ye that dwell remote from human sympathy. Oh that our missionaries abroad may feel the rich comfort of this fact; for they full often, like lone sentinels, keep watch with eyes that long to see a friend. They are separated from intercourse with brethren, they miss the friendships which tend to comfort and confirm, but it is God that calls them alone, and he will bless them and increase them. The purer churches of to-day, standing alone as they do, because they dare not make unholy alliances with any,—standing alone, I say, in simple trust in the living Lord—ought not to be afraid with any amazement, but attempt great things for God and expect great things from God.

Once more, I cannot help asking your attention to the fact that Abraham was not only a man called from heathendom, one man, and a lone man; but he was a *man who had to be stripped yet further*. The blessing was—"Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee," but the manifest fulfilment of it was not by-and-by. As we have already seen, he must come away from his kindred and his father's house, and he must dwell in Palestine till the promised seed was born. But how long he waited for the expected heir! Twenty, yes, almost thirty years rolled away, and the man Abraham was ninety years old and nine. He is very old; and yet he is to be blessed with a son. He must number the full tale of a hundred years before Isaac can be born. This promised child was to be according to promise, and therefore it could not be born till nature was recognized as spent. As for Sarah—it was not possible that she should become a mother at her advanced age, and yet it must be so, for God had said it.

The believing pair had waited on till in an evil hour Sarah suggested a desperate attempt to fulfil the promise, in which she still firmly believed. That artifice broke down; it was a part of the divine plan that it should do so. The covenant promise was not to the seed after the flesh. When that scheme had been set aside, the Lord in his own time fulfilled his word.

Joy! joy! in the house of Abraham and Sarah. What a feast there was that Isaac was born, filling the house with laughter. But he must die! "Get thee up," said God, "and take thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." The grand old man will do it. He will get up early in the morning, and the father and the son will journey together silently; for the aged heart is too full to talk. He believes God, and is sure that even if he should actually slay his son at God's command the promise would somehow be kept. Abraham could not tell how, but it was no business of his to tell how; he was fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform. God had said to him "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and he believed that God could raise Isaac from the dead, or in some other way achieve the promise. Thus he grasped the resurrection. He laid hold on a truth which was deeper than he knew of: by his faith he realized resurrection for Isaac though as yet the Lord Jesus had not shown the way by his own rising from the dead. What a stripping Abraham had endured! Who can describe what would have been the wretchedness

of that aged parent if it had not been for his faith! Men int love the children of their old age. See how a grandchild is fc by his grandsire, and thus must Isaac have been loved of Abr and yet he must die by his father's own hand. Oh, most mis among the miserable must he have been who stood there on l Moriah, called to such a duty, his heart breaking while his soul ol Such, doubtless, would have been the case had not faith been his Look, then, to Abraham your father, and say is he not the greatest ol the grandest human representative of the great Father God himself in the fulness of time spared not his own Son, but freely delivered up for us all? Liked to God among mortal men art thou Abraham therefore well mightest thou be his friend! In thy trial broug such a stripping we may yet envy thee as we hear the Lord sa "Now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withhel son, thine only son from me." Now, if in all these trials Abrahah yet blessed, and God's purposes were accomplished in him, can w believe that the same God can work by us also, despite our downca and humiliations? When we are utterly broken and crushed ma the Lord's strength be made perfect in our weakness? Let u question the promise because of our personal deadness and inabilit: believe God without wavering, for he hath said, "My grace is suff for thee."

Now, brothers and sisters, here is the sum and substance of thi head of my discourse: in looking to the rock whence we are l we have to see the Lord working the greatest results from appa inadequate causes. This teaches us to cease from calculating n possibilities, and probabilities, for we have to deal with God, with v all things are possible. Almighty God can assuredly do whatev says he will do. Who is to hinder him? Let the voice ring out all the earth, and let it be heard in hell itself—who shall stay the of God when he wills to achieve a thing? He fears no oppos and he needs no help. Of what did he make the world? whom took he counsel? Who instructed him? And, if all the ti that are have been spoken into existence by God alone, by his word, can he not yet build up his church, even if on her earthly there should seem to be no material with which to raise her walls? sider creation and remark what God hath wrought. See how al millions of mankind have sprung from a single pair, because God bl them in the beginning. But I must not multiply illustrations from n or from history, for they rise spontaneously before your own m Refresh your faith by a reference to our own island history. If you v firmly believe in the conversion of the heathen remember what fathers were when bloody rites were performed in the oak woods or the huge monoliths of Stonehenge. The Druidic system was as crue degrading as any that now curses a savage people; but the heral Jesus conquered. Where are the gods of the Druids now? Wh verences the golden sickle and the sacred oak? The thing is gor though it never had been. Why, then, should not other evil idol: pass away? Look again at the triumph of Protestantism in country. What was it at first? A thing utterly despised and ht down. The stakes of Smithfield cannot be forgotten by those who

so near the spot. Yet, despite all, the gospel of God triumphed, and rood, and pyx, and image were broken in contempt. Let the days of the Puritans, the palmy days when God was known in England, tell how thoroughly Bible truth won the victory. Why not again? Why not everywhere? If you desire another illustration, look at our own body of Christians? History has hitherto been written by our enemies, who never would have kept a single fact about us upon the record if they could have helped it, and yet it leaks out every now and then that certain poor people called Anabaptists were brought up for condemnation. From the days of Henry II. to those of Elizabeth we hear of certain unhappy heretics who were hated of all men for the truth's sake which was in them. We read of poor men and women, with their garments cut short, turned out into the fields to perish in the cold, and anon of others who were burnt at Newington for the crime of Anabaptism. Long before your Protestants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." No sooner did the visible church begin to depart from the gospel than these men arose to keep fast by the good old way. The priests and monks wished for peace and slumber, but there was always a Baptist or a Lollard tickling men's ears with holy Scripture, and calling their attention to the errors of the times. They were a poor, persecuted tribe. The halter was thought to be too good for them. At times ill-written history would have us think that they died out, so well had the wolf done his work on the sheep. Yet here we are, blessed and multiplied; and Newington sees other scenes from Sabbath to Sabbath. As I think of your numbers and efforts, I can only say in wonder—What a growth! As I think of the multitudes of our brethren in America, I may well say, What hath God wrought? Our history forbids discouragement. Never cause more hopeless once; none more hopeful to-day! It matters little what may yet happen, the cause is safe. What if all our Baptist organizations expire! What if but one man should be left faithful to the old banner, our Captain would yet triumph gloriously, for he saveth not by many nor by few. Though all else faileth, the Lord shall reign for ever and ever. This is the lesson which, I pray, we may all of us learn, and then, by faith, go forth to act upon it.

II. With great brevity, I shall dwell for a moment upon the second point, namely—THE MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS CHOSEN MAN. The text says, "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you," and it must mean,—consider him and see what he was, that you may learn from him. You perceive at once that his grand characteristic was *his faith*. In this faith many other most brilliant qualities are comprehended, but his faith lay at the bottom of all. Here is his epitaph:—"Abraham believed God." That was a mainspring of all his acts, the glory of his life, "Abraham believed God." The men that God will work by, whatever else they have not, must have faith in God. Though it is to be desired that the believer should have every mental and moral qualification, yet it is astounding how, if there be real faith, a multitude of imperfections are swallowed up, and the man is still a power. I would mention Samson as an extreme case. He was the feeblest of men, and the least fitted to be a judge in Israel; but oh,

what faith! And what wonders it achieved! A thousand men! He is like a child in his belief that God is with him. He never calculates at all; it is all the same to him whether there are a thousand or one. He flings himself upon the host, and has slain them before we can realize the deadly odds. A sword; no, he has no sword: an old jawbone of an ass is quite enough for an arm which God strengthens. See how he smites them, hip and thigh, till they lie in heaps before him. I do not suppose that it would have signified to Samson if there had been a million Philistines: with a thousand to one, a man is so thoroughly outnumbered that numbers cease to count. Here was an impossibility before him, and what could be worse. Brethren, when you do get off your feet, and must swim, you may as well have fifty fathoms of water beneath you as not, for you can but drown. In the case of faith, drowning is out of the question, and swimming is good in deep water, for there is no fear of striking against a rock. Faith glories in difficulties and infirmities, because the power of God doth rest upon her. If the work is barely possible to her strength faith hardly likes it; but she gets into her sphere when in trials far beyond human strength she laughs at impossibility, and cries, "It shall be done."

Abraham's faith was such that it led him to obedience. He was called to go out, and he went, not knowing whither he went. His faith through grace led him to perseverance; for once in God's way he did not leave it, but still abode a sojourner with God. His faith led him to expectancy; he looked for the promised seed, and not only for an Isaac but for the Messiah. So clear was the vision of his expectancy that before his eyes Christ was set forth, visibly. Did not the Saviour, who knew all things, say, "Abraham saw my day; he saw it, and was glad"?

The like faith also dwelt in the breast of Sarah; and, as we are told in the text to look to Sarah as well as Abraham, let us not fail to do so. The faith of Sarah was not little when she left home with her husband; forsaking her kith and kin from love to God, and to him whom she called "lord." She acted as if she had said to the great patriarch, "Where thou goest I will go; where thou dwellest I will dwell, for thy God is my God." Nor did the trial of her faith end with the moving; she had to take up with tent-life and all its inconveniences. It is the woman that knows the discomfort of domestic life under such circumstances. We never hear that she complained for a moment, though the cold of winter and the heat of summer are neither of them warded off by a tent. How readily she entertained her husband's guests. Though they might drop in at most unseasonable hours, or call her to bake bread in the heat of the day, she was glad to welcome strangers, for like her husband she was given to hospitality. I saw you smile, dear friends, when I mentioned domestic matters; but to me it is the solemnity of faith that men and women can not only pray and sing, but can put up with household discomforts out of obedience to God. Certain people look upon faith as a fine, airy, sentimental thing with which to roam among the stars, anticipate millenniums, and enjoy yourself in lofty contemplation. I believe far more in a faith which, whether it eats or drinks, does all to the glory of God; faith which like Sarah dwells in the tent and works there; faith which is cheerful over a scanty meal and drives away the fear of want; faith which can come down in life from

the mansion to the cottage, if providence so decrees. From Abraham's comfortable home at Ur to his gipsy wanderings in Palestine the change must have been great, but Abraham may not have felt it one half as much as Sarah, for men can rough it and live out of doors, but the housewife knows all about it, and great was her faith that she never raised a question about the propriety of her husband's course of life: and though she laughed when she was told that she should bear a son, yet remember that in the eleventh of Hebrews it is written—"Through faith also Sarah herself received strength." She was the mother of Isaac, not in the power of the flesh, but through the energy of faith, therefore look at her as the text bids you.

Christian men and Christian women, mark well this fact—that the characteristic of the person whom God will bless is that he believes and acts upon his belief. Without faith it is impossible to please God; but the man of faith is God's man. And why is this? I answer, because *faith is the only faculty of our spirit which can grasp God's ideal.* The greatest man, without faith, cannot tread in the divine footsteps. The ideas of God are as high above us as the heavens are above the earth: and therefore it is not by any fancied vastness of our feeble minds that we can ever rise into fellowship with God. Faith in the sight of God's thought whispers to herself—"I cannot understand this great thing, nor need I wish to do so. What is my understanding? Perhaps I trust to it too much already. I am called to do what God bids me, without knowing why, and I am glad it is so, for now I can worship him by bowing before his sovereign will." There is a capacity about faith for grasping divine promises and purposes, a width, a breadth, a height, a depth, which can hold the infinite truth as no other power can do. Love alone can rival it, for it embraces the infinite God himself. With the far-reaching plans and promises of God faith alone is fit to deal; carnal reason is altogether out of the lists.

Faith, too, has a great power of reception, and therein lies much of her adaptation to the divine purpose. Self-confidence, courage, resolution, cool reasoning, whatever else they are good at, are bad at humbly receiving. Those vessels which are full already are of no use as receivers; but faith presents her emptiness to God, and opens her mouth that God may fill it. Mercy needs not a jewel, but a casket into which to put her gems, and faith is exactly what she wants.

Then, again, *faith always uses the strength that God gives her.* Pride would vapour with it, and doubt would evaporate it; but faith is practical, and economically uses the talent entrusted to her. Faith has already spent all her own strength, and she so yearns to achieve her purposes that she uses all the power that God will lend her. Faith eats her manna and leaves not a morsel for worms to breed in.

Faith, too, can wait the Lord's time and place. When faith is weak men are in a dreadful hurry, but strong faith does not judge the Lord to be slack concerning his promise. As God achieves his purpose with infinite leisure, he loves a faith that is patient and looks not for its reward this day or the next. "He that believeth shall not make haste": that is to say, he shall not be ashamed or confounded by present trials so as to rush upon unbelieving actions. Faith leaves times and seasons with God to whom they belong.

God loveth faith and blesseth it too, because *it giveth him all the glory*. The true believer will not allow a trace of self-glory to linger on his hands. "Where is boasting then?" was a question once asked in the house of faith, and the searchers examined every nook and corner in every chamber to find it, but they found it not. Then they said to faith, "Where is boasting?" She answered, "I shut him out." "It is excluded," shut out, and the door fastened in its face. You do not believe God if you boast of what you are doing: least of all do you believe if you pride yourself in your faith, for faith is not mistrustful of her God but of herself. Faith looks to God to keep her alive as well as to fulfil the promise that he has made to her. This then is the kind of faith which was characteristic of Abraham, and the question is, have we got it? Have we so much of it that God can largely bless us? The comfort is that, if we have it not, the author of faith can give it to us, and if we have it in scant measure he can increase our faith.

Is not this a solid reason why you and I should take heart? You who do not believe that missions will succeed; you who readily become discouraged and discourage others; I beg you go home and seek more faith. We cannot go down to the battle with such soldiers as you; you do but encumber the host. The men that lapped are the only ones that Gideon will take to war. Send the fearful ones to the rear and let them take care of the baggage, so that when the battle is won they may have a share of the spoil, according to David's law. For actual service and warfare we must have men of faith. Cromwell found that when his men came dressed in all sorts of suits and colours they were apt to injure one another in the melee, and so he put them all in uniform. The uniform of the Prince Immanuel is faith: no man may call himself a soldier of the cross who hath it not. This is the victory which overcometh the world, even your faith. Brother ministers, let us take heed lest we be found qualified for our ministry in all respects except this one. You have learning, eloquence, industry, honesty, but do you so believe in God as to expect his word to act divinely on men's hearts. Do you preach believably? Do you pray believably? I leave the question with you.

III. I have shown you, dear friends, that God effected his purpose, and raised up a chosen nation out of one man, whose chief characteristic was his faith: and now I want you to notice **OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THAT ONE MAN**. I dwelt upon that while reading the chapter (Romans iv.) There is a relation between us and Abraham even as Paul assures us in the epistle to the Galatians, "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." Something, surely, is expected of the children of such a man as Abraham. O, for shame, thou unbelieving one! Is Abraham thy father? Art thou one of the faithful seed? Great mountains are often succeeded by low valleys. Perhaps that is the case with you; but it should not be so. The natural seed were cut off because they had no faith, let not those who are grafted in, think to do without it. It is by faith that you are a son at all. You disprove your pedigree if you tolerate unbelief. Oh! let nobody find fault with Abraham through you, and surely they may do so if they find you staggering. That "staggering" is a shocking

business: staggering at God's promises is terrible. Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief. May we never dishonour the right noble grace of faith, but so believe that all men may know Abraham's God to be our God. O for abounding spiritual life, for the God of Abraham is not the God of the dead but of the living; and we can only live unto God by faith.

Brethren, because we are the seed of Abraham, the apostle declares that the blessing of Abraham has come upon us also. I pray that all the friends and labourers in our Missionary Society may grasp the blessing of Abraham. What is it? It is a covenant favour that belongs to all who are the servants of God by faith. Here is the substance of it: "Surely blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee." That is the grand old covenant promise and it belongs to the church. Note that the blessing is attended with multiplying. Some friends are afraid of statistics which represent the increase of the churches; I am far more afraid of those statistics which will show that we do not increase as we could wish. The blessing of the church is the increase of the church. The two go together: "Blessing, I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thee." How much are Christians to be multiplied in the world? At the present moment we do not seem to be increasing as fast as the population. I am afraid that the number of converted persons relatively to the population is scarcely as great as it was thirty years ago; we long to be multiplied at a very different rate from this—and we shall be if we have faith in our God. Hear ye the covenant word: "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." These are lines from the covenant, which is sure to all the seed and can never be broken. We have been called and blessed, and it is of necessity that we increase also. We are bound to increase; we are destined to overrun the nations; the Hittites, the Hivites, the Amorites, of Popery, Mahometanism, and Idolatry are in the land, but their false systems are utterly to perish. Jesus at the head of his people shall drive them out—I mean not the men, but their evil beliefs. They may take notice to quit, for he is coming before whom all men must bow. O that ere he himself shall appear his spiritual presence in the midst of his church might suffice for victory, that all mankind might call him blessed. We are bound to increase, till the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for us, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Upon the church in her vigour shall yet descend the blessings of the tribes of Joseph. "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." The success of truth is the battle of the Lord, and the increase of his church is according to his own promise, therefore in quietness we may possess our souls.

IV. Last of all consider for a minute OUR POSITION BEFORE ABRAHAM'S GOD. Do not let anything that I have said about Abraham for a moment take your mind off from the Lord himself, because the pith of it all lies here,—"*I called him alone.*" Look to Abraham, but only as to the rock from which the Lord quarried his

people :” your main thought must be Jehovah himself. “*I, I* called him alone, and blessed him.” “*I* the Lord do all these things.” Look unto the everlasting God who doeth great wonders, and stay yourselves upon him.

Let us joyfully recollect that *the Lord our God has not changed*, nay, not in one jot or tittle. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” There is so far a change in the revelation of him, that it is brighter now in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, than it could have been through seer and vision ; but that should be a motive for increased faith. “His arm is not shortened that he cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear.” This God of Abraham is still almighty, and still in the midst of the covenanted ones. If the ages that have passed over his awful brow could wrinkle it and his strength could decay, then might we also decline in our confidence ; but it is not so. He fainteth not, neither is weary. Our behaviour towards him, therefore, should resemble that of Abraham ; and especially, representing, as we do many of us, the churches of Jesus Christ as ministers or deacons, we must never dishonour the Lord by unbelief. Doubt everything but God. Let God be true and every man a liar. This the everlasting decree which none can change,—Christ must reign ; he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied ; the kings of the earth must bow before him. Do not doubt it, for God hath sworn by his own life that all flesh shall see his glory. Here is the grand argument for strong faith.

Notice next that *the covenant of God has not changed*. God hath not recalled his words, nor taken a pen and struck out his promises from the record. Read the covenant words, and write them upon the door-posts of your mission-house, “In blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” This is the covenant with the one spiritual seed of Abraham, this is the marrow of it, and it has never been revoked. As I have said before, we read it now in clearer light, and understand better the fulness of its provisions, but the covenant is not disannulled. Let us go to God with any one promise of it, and we can say to him, “This is thy promise in Christ Jesus ; and thou hast not spoken in secret in a dark place and withdrawn thy word and said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.” Such pleading will prevail. He will never run back from his word. Has he said, and will he not do it ? Therefore let us cry, “Remember thy word unto thy servant upon which thou hast caused me to hope.”

But there is this also to be added, that this work which we desire the Lord to do is in some respects even less than that which he has done with Abraham. What ask we ? Not that he should begin with one man to build up a nation, or create a church ? No, but that Zion being builded, he should comfort her, and cause her waste places to rejoice. The field is the world, and the seed is ready for the sowing. The gospel is in the hands of those who have the best means of spreading it. Everything is ready for its ultimate triumph. The train is laid ; we only need the heavenly fire to touch it, and the deed is accomplished. O that the work of the Lord may be speedily done ; that the Lord may

carry on his work of righteousness and make a short work in the earth. I say that if God has done this greater thing, if he has excavated a nation from the quarry of Abraham, we may well expect the self-same God to keep his covenant, to multiply his church, and build her up after the similitude of a palace. The time to favour Zion, even the set time, has come. Beside that; we have been already visited by God as Abraham had not been when first he was called. Abraham had not known the Lord till he called him, but our Zion is familiar with God, for she is the city of the great king. He dwelleth in our midst by his Holy Spirit, and holy hymn and prayer rise every day from the multitudes that fear him. The Lord hath redeemed, and justified, and saved his people, and surely we may look to him to refresh and revive his heritage.

What marvellous things hath God done on the face of the earth since Abraham's days!—the stupendous marvel of incarnation, the height and depth of which none of us can measure; the wondrous work of redemption, the highest, grandest, divinest achievement of the Deity—all this is done; what may we not expect after this? You know more of God than Abraham could know; I beseech you then, trust him, at least up to the level of the patriarch. How shall we forge an excuse if we do not? What can excuse us if we distrust so glorious a God.

Brethren, it remains for me only to add this practical word. Let us throw ourselves more and more upon our God. If you have any work appointed you of the Lord, and it is within the compass of your strength, shame upon you if you do not perform it at once; but if it be beyond you, herein will God be glorified if you do it by his power. If there remaineth no might, wit, or wisdom in you, if you are deeply conscious of your weakness you are by this experience made the more fit to be used of the Lord, for when we are weak then are we strong. If you have confidence in God all things are possible to him that believeth. Oh, when will the church cast herself upon her God as men throw themselves into the stream when they mean to swim? They seek no longer for foothold, their foot leaves the spot whereon it rested, and they throw themselves trustfully upon the wave. The everlasting ocean of love and power is ready to upbear us: we shall swim gallantly to shore if we will but trust this blessed sea of love.

Let us begin to believe God and then let us act in daily life as if we believed him. The just shall live by faith. Some people have a faith which is for show, a Sunday faith, faith that cannot bear the wear and tear of every-day life; varnished and gilded, but with no pure metal in it. The faith of Abraham could lead strings of camels and flocks of sheep away from Haran to Canaan. His was the faith which could drive the tent-pin into a foreign soil, or roll up the canvas and seek another unknown halting place. The faith of Abraham is a faith that saith to wayfaring men, "Turn in, and I will get you a little water and wash your feet." It is a practical, active, living, week-day, every-day faith. I will speak very broadly and plainly, and say we need a bread-and-cheese faith, that is to say, a faith which believes that God who feeds the ravens will send us our daily bread; a faith which believes that the heavenly Father who clothes the lilies will much more clothe

his children ; the faith that can believe God about the things that are actually around it, and that does not live in the region of fiction. See how God blessed Abraham with flocks and herds, and everything temporal as well as spiritual, because he walked in reference to these things along the line of faith ; gave Lot his choice of pasturage, refused the offer of the king of Sodom, and resolutely paid the children of Heth the full price for the cave and the field. If we walk by faith in business life God may not in every case bless us with abundance of temporal mercies, but assuredly we shall be blessed. He may send us adversity, and poverty, but in these things faith is more than conqueror, glorying in tribulations also.

In the Lord's work of evangelizing the world you must have a down-right, practical faith ; not a faith that will sing when the organ begins to play, and then be so busy fumbling the hymn paper as to forget the collection: not the faith of those who boast of Carey, and Marshman, and Knibb, but whose own names never appear in the subscription list for a single shilling : not a faith which sings—

“Fly abroad thou mighty Gospel.”

but never lends a bit of down to make a feather for its wings.

Let us hear the scripture, as it says, “Hearken!” If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, “Hearken!” for you may hear the Sabbath bells ringing in the everlasting peace, and angel songs welcoming the reign of grace over all nations. Let the ears of deaf unbelief be unstopped, for the whole earth echoes with the praises of the Lord. Say not that the day is distant. Hearken! Let faith be the listener, and she will hear across the ages which divide us from the gladsome period. Then shall you listen all day and all night long for many a year, but never hear the roll of drum or roar of cannon. Hearken! Ye shall hear from the islands of the sea, and from the once benighted continents, psalms and hymns, and holy songs, ascending unto the one Jehovah and to his Christ. Hearken! for ears were never gladdened with sweeter music.

Then *look!* till you see the temples of false gods crumbling into dust. See how the shrines are tottering, and the idols breaking as though smitten with a rod of iron. Mohammed's crescent wanes, never to wax again ; and she, of the Seven Hills, is hated of the kings, and they burn her with fire. “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth!” Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. They fall! They fall! They are as the slain. The day breaketh, and the shadows flee away. O ye watchers that look for the dawning, fall not asleep through sorrowful weariness. The morning cometh. It shall not tarry. Do you doubt it? Know ye not that the Lord reigneth? Is he not the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” If you doubt it, dissolve your Missionary Society, and do not pretend to do a work in which you have no faith ; but if you believe in the triumph of God's work, and that you are called to it, behave worthily to so divine an enterprise. God do so to you as you deal with him in this matter. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PRIEST ORDAINED BY THE OATH OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1ST, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

"And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest: (for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:) by so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament."—Hebrews vii. 20—22.

Those of you who read Scripture carefully will have noticed that the word "better" is one of the key-words of the Epistle to the Hebrews. You are constantly meeting with it. In the opening chapter we read that our Lord Jesus Christ is "made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." Look a little further and you are taught that he is better than Moses, inasmuch as Moses was faithful as a servant in the Lord's house, but Christ as a Son over his own house. Further on we find our blessed Lord described as better than Aaron, while his blood is mentioned as speaking better things than that of Abel; and he is declared in our text to be the surety of a better covenant, of which it is said that it is established upon better promises. It would be a very delightful subject to work out the betterness of Christ, and of his blood, and of his covenant, and to show that however good other things may be they must all yield in excellence to him. It is implied in the use of the word "better" that the ordinances of the ceremonial law were good in their place, but Jesus is better than the best of all visible things: the eternal Christ is better than the best of all the temporal arrangements which God has made for the good of man. How much better what heart shall conceive? "If the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

It behoves us, my dear brothers and sisters, to have a firmer faith than Old Testament saints, because we see more clearly our ground of trust. Those who lived in the comparative darkness of the previous dispensation were saved by faith, and among them there were not a few eminent believers, surely we also ought to excel in our confidence in God. Let the eleventh of Hebrews stand as a triumphal arch with the names of ancient believers recorded thereon: these all died in faith, and they were

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no mean men ; but inasmuch as we enjoy a brighter light, and are living under a better economy, we are called upon to be their superiors in faith. Our faith should be clearer, calmer, stronger, more effectual in working ; we should do greater things than these in the name of Jesus. Being endowed more richly with the Spirit of God, the modern church should attempt grander works than Israel ever thought upon, and so there should be a shining more and more unto the perfect day. If better are the promises, better and yet better should we be under accumulating obligations.

My object at this time will not be so much to enter into details of doctrine concerning our Saviour's priesthood as to utter practical truths, and press them on the heart. I shall not attempt to exhaust so wonderful a subject as the parallel between Melchisedec and Christ, but I shall try to strengthen the faith of believers, and also to leave unbelievers without excuse if they will not believe in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, confirming his mission by an oath. We want practical results this morning, and no practical result will content us but this, that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom God hath sent. To this end were the Scriptures written, as saith the evangelist John, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." The object of the written word is also the object of the spoken word ; we would have you hear, believe, and live. Vain are your reading and hearing unless they lead you up to a sincere reception of the witness of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ. Oh that you may not on this occasion hear in vain !

To our text, then, and may the Spirit of God graciously be with us in speaking upon it.

I. Men should believe in Jesus Christ with their whole heart, and rely upon him with unstaggering confidence : first, because of OUR LORD'S SPECIAL ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD. The Lord Jesus Christ was ordained to the priesthood, according to the hundred and tenth Psalm, in a manner distinct from all others. His ordination was unique, for neither Aaron, nor his sons, nor any of the priests of the tribe of Levi were ever ordained by an oath. Ceremonies most important, imposing, instructive, and impressive were performed, but there was no oath. God gave promises to the house of Levi, but he expressly stopped short of anything like an oath to them, not because his promise can be broken, but because that promise was conditional, and must not be confirmed by an oath, as though it constituted a perpetual engagement. But our Saviour is made a priest by an oath, and it is written, as if to make it exceeding sure, "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent" ; not because God ever can or doth repent, or run back from his oath in any case, but for the confirmation of our faith in the immutability of his word it is expressly added, "He will not repent." By an oath which standeth fast for evermore Christ is made a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

But why, my brethren, an oath for Jesus and none for other priests ? First, because of *the greater dignity of Christ* above all other priests that ever were, for he is the Son of the Highest, as they were not. They were men that had infirmity, but he is sinless : they lived and died, and so were changed, but "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." They

were ordained to be types and emblems, serving for the time of Israel's infancy, but he came as the "I am," the substance of the whole. They were mere men and nothing more, but Jesus counted it not robbery to be equal with God, though for our sakes he assumed our nature. It seemed becoming that God should settle him in the priesthood by an oath, seeing he is above all, and infinitely superior to all others that have ever exercised the priesthood. I tremble while I speak of the oath of God; for God's lifting his hand to heaven and swearing by himself, because he can swear by no greater, is something so solemn that one scarcely dares to think of it. The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. The devout soul is full of awe at the bare thought of God in his most fatherly and ordinary acts, but how shall we think of the Lord girt with solemnity, resolute in purpose, stern in truth, as lifting his hand and taking an oath? Surely this is the innermost sanctuary of mystery, the holy of holies. This oath was for the honour of his dear Son as he assumed the sacred priesthood on behalf of the sons of men. The glory of his character, the dignity of his work, the certainty of its accomplishment, and the supreme excellence of his motive in entering upon it, all lift up the priesthood of Christ out of the category of all human priesthoods, and therefore the eternal Father signalises it by a special mark of distinction, and himself makes oath that his only begotten Son is a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Another reason is found in *the eternal character of his work*. The priesthood of Aaron and his successors was intended to be temporary. God did not confirm the priests of old in their offices, because he held in reserve the right to set them aside when he pleased, and he from the first intended that their functions should be abolished when the fulness of time should come for another and better priest to take their place. They were candles for the darkness, but the sun was to rise, and then they would not be needed: they were pictorial representations, but when the substance was come they would not be required. He allowed their priesthood to be one of imperfect men, because he intended by-and-by to supersede it by a perfect and enduring priesthood: hence no oath of God attended the ordination of the sons of Aaron. But our Lord Jesus Christ's priesthood, and all the economy which he has ushered in, was intended by God to be perpetual, therefore doth he confirm it with an oath. No end of days will ever happen to our High Priest, nor shall the economy of grace be supplanted by another and clearer revelation. It shall be developed from strength to strength, and we shall see greater things than these in the days of the personal reign and the millennial glory, but no new economy of grace shall overthrow the present. Think not, O ye ungodly, if ye reject Christ that there will yet come a Saviour better than he; for you there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin. I have heard men talk of "a larger hope": I believe it to be a larger lie than ordinary if it supposes more mercy than is revealed in Christ Jesus. There is no larger hope than that which Christ has revealed: if it had been so he would have told us. Stars can be excelled by other stars, but what shall outshine the sun? One human gospel can be eclipsed by another, but how can there be a more loving, tender, gracious gospel than that which is embodied in

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—is that message of grace to be exceeded, and is greater love yet to be revealed? No; the gospel is God's ultimatum: he will go no further: we have the last proclamation of mercy to men, the last Saviour, the last foundation for hopes to be built upon, the last fountain in which sin can be washed away, the last door of hope by which men shall escape from the guilt and punishment of sin. I beseech you, avail yourselves of it, for God has confirmed it with an oath that it may stand for ever: it is your one and only hope for eternity, lay hold upon it while you may. The oath of God sets forth the dignity of our Lord's person and the eternity of his office: see that ye despise not one who is thus great and abiding.

By an oath also was our Lord set apart, because of *the reality of his priesthood*, and the substance that dwelt in his sacrifice. As we have already said, the Levitical priesthood dealt only with the shadows of good things to come, and not with the very substance of the things. So to speak, the sacrificial bullock was not actually a sacrifice, but the representation of the sacrifice that was to come. The morning and evening lambs did not take away sin, but only mirrored the great blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. In very deed and truth, the men of the house of Aaron who attended at the visible altar were not actual priests before the real altar of the Lord, but only shadows of the true. The real altar is the person of Christ, the real sacrifice is the death of Christ, and the real priest is Christ himself. The images of heavenly things were glorious, but the glory of the things themselves dwells in Christ, and we behold that glory full of grace and truth. Fly, ye shadows, since it is clear that ye were meant to be so, for God did not establish you as abiding things. You did but predict and foreshadow, but you were not the blessings which ye pictured. In Christ is the actual putting away of sin, the effectual atonement, the real and efficacious substitution for guilty men, the redemption which actually redeems, the sacrifice which reconciles. In him dwells the truth of the matter: he is not prediction but fact, not promise but fulfilment. Oh, never listen for a moment to those who would spiritualize Christ himself, and make out even his person and work to be a shadow. Certain teachers have arisen who seem to look upon our Redeemer's life as a sort of allegory, an instructive parable, or a myth, out of which eclectic minds like theirs may spell out mystic truth. It cannot be so: Christ Jesus is a fact: God was on earth in human flesh: that mysterious person the Son of God, the Son of Mary, lived and loved and died and rose again: his sacrifice once offered has for ever put away sin, and it has bestowed upon him the power by his intercession to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. If I had been sent this day to be the preacher of the shadows of the law I would have done my best to obey my Master, but as I am commissioned to preach absolute certainties I am full of delight, and resolved to speak boldly. We preach not fictions, dreams, or parables, but literal facts. What a joy I feel; a joy as true and unfeigned as the glad tidings I deliver! For real guilt here is actual atonement, and sure forgiveness; for access to God here is an open way, and a tender hand to guide you in it. Trifle

not with that which is no trifle, lest haply when you come into real straits, and the waters of death are actually around you, you shall find the lack of the only friend who can effectually help you in your hour of need. Death and judgment are no fiction; seek therefore in very deed for the substantial grace which can bear you through. God confirms the priesthood of Christ by an oath because it is a real priesthood: I pray you cast your soul upon it by true and real faith.

But perhaps to usward the main reason of Christ's being installed in the priesthood by an oath of God is this, *for the strengthening of our faith*. Brethren, an oath for confirmation among men is the end of all strife: when an honest man has sworn to it the testimony stands in evidence, and may not be questioned. When God not only gives his promise and his word, but swears to his declaration, who shall dare to doubt? Shall blasphemy go the length of accusing him of perjury, or shall profanity give him the lie in the teeth of his oath? There was no need for God to swear if there had not been in us a fearful lack of faith, but "by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie" he hath given us strong consolation by swearing by himself that it shall be so. I do beseech you, since God's design is the confirmation of your faith, pray that your faith may be confirmed by it. No measure of faith in Christ can ever be too great. If we trust him blindly, implicitly, immeasurably, with every interest for time and for eternity, we cannot have ventured too far. He that is ordained with an oath may be rested on without fear: he cannot fail, it is not possible while God's own truth is staked upon his mission, and guarantees its success.

Beloved, ought not this great truth to bring many tremblers to believe in Jesus Christ? The Christ we preach is not an enthusiastic amateur who has come among men with high purpose but without commission, with good intentions but without authority; but God himself hath appointed him to his office and settled him in it, in the most solemn manner, swearing, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Will you not trust him with your soul since God entrusts him with his honour? Will you not accept the priest whom God himself has ordained? Will you not accept the sacrifice which he has presented, whose efficacy abides for ever before God? I beseech you, men and brethren, as many of you as have not believed in Jesus Christ, look ye well to it that ye do not reject a gospel more certain than certainty itself. I know not how else to express the sureness of that to which God hath set no less a seal than his own oath. Right joyfully do we see the whole nature of the infinite God guaranteeing the office of our glorious high priest, for by swearing by himself the great Jehovah hath made his very being a hostage for the performance of the covenant of which Jesus is the surety, and put forward his own character for truth as the pledge of Christ's eternal priesthood. May no soul among us dare to refuse a priest so surely ordained to his office, and settled in it by Jehovah himself.

II. Secondly, we ought to believe on the Lord Jesus because of THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HIS PRIESTHOOD. This is seen in the tenour of the divine oath, which runs thus: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." Very briefly let me mention some of the respects in which our Lord Jesus is a priest after the order of

Melchisedec. These ought all to be reasons for our faith, and I pray the Holy Spirit to use them for that purpose.

First, our Lord is of the order of Melchisedec as *surpassing and superseding all other priests*. As surpassing,—for Melchisedec comes before human view as priest of the Most High God, blessing Abraham, “and without doubt the less is blessed of the greater.” Abraham, and Levi in his loins, pay Melchisedec homage. Now, whatever may be said about the priesthood of other men, there can be no doubt about the superior priesthood of Melchisedec. Abraham acknowledged it at once, so that before there were any Aaronic priests there was a greater priest. Before the foundation of the world, when there was no word concerning a priest of the house of Levi, our Lord Jesus Christ was looked upon by God as priest and sacrifice for men. It is not said, “Thou shalt be a priest,” but “Thou, a priest for ever.” The verb is left out, but the word “art,” in the present tense, is correctly enough supplied by the translators. “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” He was a priest before Aaron and his sons were born or thought of. Moreover, consider that the decree registered by the Psalmist in the hundred and tenth Psalm was published by revelation hundreds of years after the law had been given, so that it was not an old decree invalidated by the law of Moses, but a newly published decree abrogating in due time that which had gone before. Even while the law was in its palmy days, and the priest wore the Urim and the Thummim, there was a note struck in the Psalms of David which intimated the ending of it all, because there was another priest, not of the house of Aaron, who surpassed all of them, being made a priest by oath, even while they were priests without an oath. Whatever priesthood there may have been of God’s ordaining under the Old Testament, it was evidently all subordinate to the superior Melchisedec-priesthood of Jesus Christ our Saviour, and was predestinated to give place to it.

It was a priesthood which *united with itself the dignity of kingship*. This Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, was king even as Jesus Christ is King of kings, as well as high priest over the house of God. He is, first, Melek Zadok, king of righteousness, setting up a kingdom of righteousness, and fulfilling all righteousness himself; and then is he King of Salem, or of peace, bringing peace to those that believe in him and follow after righteousness. Now, it is a main ground of trust in Jesus that he is King as well as Priest, with power in his arm as well as merit in his blood; with power to rule and govern and protect us, as well as with an efficacious sacrifice to purge our sins. We ought to trust implicitly in one whose royal omnipotence supports his sacred merit. Double faith should be bestowed on him who exercises the double office of the kingdom and the priesthood.

Our faith should also rest on the fact that our Lord was, like Melchisedec, “*without father, without mother*.” We find no father or mother mentioned in the case of Melchisedec, because he did not come to the priesthood by natural descent as did the sons of Aaron; and in this he is the great type of Jesus, who is not one of a line, but the sole and only priest of his order. As a priest he is “without beginning of days or end of years,” neither taking the priesthood from a predecessor, nor passing it on to a successor, nor laying it down because of old age.

There was no beginning to our Lord's priesthood, for the witness is "Thou art a priest for ever," and there will be no end to it, for even in the glory he—

"Looks like a Lamb that has been slain,
And wears his priesthood still."

Our Lord has not left off being a priest to-day, poor sinner. Come to him with your sins and seek reconciliation. He is able to hear your confession and grant you absolution: he will present your praise and offer your prayer, for he ever liveth, and because of this he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Melchisedec had no predecessor, no assessor, and no successor; and so is it with our Lord. Of his order there was none before him,—he is the only priest of his line: none stood side by side with him, for he needed none; and none can be compared with him; by his one sacrifice *he* hath perfected all who accept his priesthood, and what more is needed? None can follow our Lord in his office. How can there be any successor to him, since he hath an endless life, and in the power of that endless life ever liveth to make intercession for us? Listen, ye that need a priest to reconcile you to God. Here is one ordained to that office from of old, who performs his office even now, and ceases not from it for a moment; who at this moment asks no help from you, nor from priest of Rome or Canterbury, or any other place, but is able himself alone, with his own precious blood and prevalent intercession, to save you to the uttermost.

This great priest of ours is *Master of all*, for as Melchisedec received homage from Abraham in the form of tithes, so doth our blessed Lord receive the reverence of all who believe. The day cometh when every knee shall bow to him, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Therefore come and trust him: trust the Lord of all. O ye guilty ones, who desire salvation, I beseech you repose upon him, for he must reign, and you must either kiss him with the homage of your heart, or else he will break you as with a rod of iron in the day of his power.

Perhaps one of the main points about Melchisedec is that he is represented as *bestowing blessing*. When he came to meet Abraham the chief thing he did was to bless the patriarch. The apostle does not refer to the bringing forth of bread and wine by Melchisedec, because he regarded it as a temporal blessing included in the greater spiritual one. Our Lord Jesus blesses all that trust him: blesses them with the riches of heaven and earth, with the eternal word which sustains their souls, and with supplies for this mortal life so that they live and praise him. It is inevitable that blessing should flow forth wherever he comes; he never touches without healing; he never speaks without consoling; he never comes to dwell with a man without enriching; he never belongs to a man without sanctifying and perfecting him. Oh, what a blessed priest he is! Who would refuse him, since he is all blessing? "Virtue has gone out of me," said he, and virtue is going out of him every day to the sons of men. "In him shall the families of the earth be blessed."

Once again, Christ is never to be changed or superseded. He is a priest *for ever*. As we read nothing of Melchisedec's having given up the priesthood, so depend upon it Christ never will lay down his office

while there remains a single man to be saved. "Once a priest always a priest" is true of the Lord Jesus Christ though true of nobody else. Once was he ordained, and none can put him from his priesthood: as once the Father set him upon the hill of Zion as King, and the kings of the earth cannot dash him from his throne. O ye who pine for certainty and seek everlasting life, come and rest your everlasting hopes on his everlasting priesthood. That is my point all the way through. You have not to trust a mere man; you have not to rely upon one who will die, or leave his office to another who may not know you or care for you; but you are to trust one who cannot change or die. If I were called upon to be the advocate of human priests this morning, if I were ordained to tell you to trust to the shavelings of Rome, my tongue would cleave to the roof of my mouth for lack of arguments: for what can there be in them that we should trust them? O sirs, the most brutish delusion in the world is to rely upon any priest of our own sinful race. I would as soon trust my salvation with the Norwood gipsy as with a Cardinal Archbishop. Her imposture is not so daring as his. What can priests do for us? "They can give absolution." The Lord absolve them from the blasphemy of such a pretence. There is one pardoning Priest, and there is none other under heaven. He hath made all his people in another sense to be priests unto himself; but as atoning priests, or as men that offer a propitiatory sacrifice, he hath ordained none, and all who pretend to such power must answer for it before the bar of God. Think ye of Roman and Anglican priests as of priests of Baal, and have no fellowship with such deceivers. Pray God to open their eyes that they may themselves be delivered from the delusion. As for you and for me, let us keep to the one Melchisedec priest, and yield subjection to none other. In Jesus we are complete: to look elsewhere would be to dishonour his perfection.

III. I beg you next to notice that our text speaks of THE SUPERIORITY OF THE COVENANT UNDER WHICH OUR LORD OFFICIATES, in which, also, we shall find abundant argument for believing in Jesus. It says, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament." Learned men have fought each other very earnestly over the word translated "Testament." Some say that it means "testament;" others answer that in the Septuagint Greek it is used as the interpretation of the Hebrew word which signifies "covenant." I feel quite sure that the combatants are both right. I am always glad when I can conscientiously take both sides in a battle, and I do so in this instance, because it matters nothing which of the two conquers, though it would be a loss for either side to be defeated. The word means both testament and covenant. God's covenant of grace has had the conditional side of it so completely fulfilled that it has virtually become a "testament," or a deed of free gift, in which the one party is a donor and the other has become simply a receiver. Though the economy of grace is a covenant under one aspect, under another it is no covenant, now requiring something from each of two parties, but it has become a testament or will as to its practical result. The old covenant was on this wise: if the Israelitish people kept to God as their God, and if the priests obeyed his law and offered sacrifice according to divine rule, God would accept and bless them. Thus there was an "if" in the covenant.

It was conditional, and therefore liable to failure. The people said, "All that thou hast spoken we will do." Eagerly, with all hands up, they cried, "We will do it. We will do it all." Within forty days they had broken the law, and to pieces went the covenant. A man's covenant is sure to be broken if it promises holiness on the part of the sinful, and perseverance on the part of the fickle-minded. Man cannot bear the burden of the needful requirements of a covenant with God. Our great High Priest represents another and surer covenant. There is no "if" in the covenant of grace. It runs thus: "I will," and "You shall." That is the tenor of it. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Its essence lies in the supreme word, "I will." Therefore, because the conditions of the covenant of grace have been fulfilled it is in no danger of abrogation, and Christ Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant.

The first covenant was typical and shadowy: it was but a school lesson for children. Just as we give to our boys models of churches or models of ships, so was the ceremonial law a model of good things to come, but it did not contain the things themselves. Christ is no surety of a mere model or pattern of things in the heavens, but of a covenant which deals with the heavenly things themselves, with real blessings, with true boons from God. The first covenant was temporary: it was meant to be so. It was meant in part to teach the coming covenant, and in part to show the weakness of man and the necessity of divine grace, but it was never meant to stand. This covenant of which Christ is the surety standeth for ever and ever. The everlasting hills may bow, and the heavens themselves be rolled up like a worn-out vesture, but God's covenant shall stand for ever and for ever while Christ its surety liveth.

The old covenant was a covenant in which there were imperfections, as Paul saith, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord." In the economy of grace of which our Lord is the surety no fault can be found, and in it there is no fuel for decay to feed upon. There is nothing about it that is weak and unprofitable, for it is "ordered in all things and sure": "he taketh away the first," not that he may set up another which shall be removed in its turn, but "that he may establish the second." In this second we have covenant purposes from eternity unalterable, love infinite and changeless, promises sure and inviolable, and pledges given

that can never be withdrawn, for the Lord hath sworn and will not repent.

How earnestly do I pray that you may have a part in this covenant! It includes all believers within its lines. O that you would believe and so lay hold upon the covenant once for all. If you have already believed, I pray you to rejoice in this covenant, and bless the Lord Jesus who has made it sure for you by his blood.

IV. Now of such a covenant or testament has Jesus Christ become the priest and surety, and with that we shall close, dwelling upon THE RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH HE STANDS TO THAT COVENANT. This is our fourth point. I am sure we did not expect as we were reading this passage that we should come upon the word "surety." The apostle was speaking of our Lord as a priest, and he puts it thus, "By so much"—that is, by reason of his being inducted into his office by an oath—"was Christ made a surety of a better testament." However there is the word "surety," and doubtless there is excellent reason for the unexpected turn in the sense. Testaments do not need sureties, therefore the passage should be read "covenant." But why did he turn from the idea of priesthood to that of suretyship? How is our Lord Jesus a surety?

He is so, first, because *we are absolutely certain that the covenant of grace will stand because the Redeemer has come into the world and has died for us.* Brethren, the gift of Christ is a pledge that the covenant, of which he is the substance, cannot be dissolved. Christ has been born into the world, God himself has become incarnate: that is done and can never be undone, how can the Lord draw back after going so far? More, Christ has died: he beareth in his flesh to-day the scars of his crucifixion: that also is done, and can never be undone. If God had ever meant that this covenant should be temporary he would never have given his Son to bleed and die as the substance of that covenant. It cannot be that so vast an expense should be laid out upon a transient business. Moreover, Jesus lives, and as long as he lives the covenant must be regarded as a reality. It cannot possibly be that a work should be regarded as a fiction when it has been wrought out by such an one as he is. The ever-living Son of God did not die to perform a mere representation: the abiding essence of the matter is in his work, and he lives to prove that it is so. The priests of the house of Aaron were poor sureties of the former covenant, for they could not keep it themselves, but Christ *has* kept the covenant of grace; he has fulfilled all that was conditional in it, and carried out all that was demanded on man's part. It was conditional that Christ should present a perfect righteousness and a perfect atonement: he has effected this to the full, and now there is no "if" in it. The covenant now reads as a legacy, or a will, the will of God, the New Testament of the Most High. Christ has made it so, and the very fact that there is such a person as Jesus Christ the Son of man living, bleeding, dying, risen, reigning, is the proof that this covenant stands secure though earth's old columns bow.

But next, *Christ is a surety on God's part.* I know that divines say that God does not need any surety, that he is to be trusted without it. This is true, and he is to be relied upon without an oath, but even as he takes an oath for our sake, so he provides a surety for our sake that we

may believe with stronger confidence. Christ is the bondsman of God on the Father's behalf, that the covenant shall be fulfilled. "Look," says the Father, "have you ever doubted me? Believe my Son. Have I not given him to you? Is he not one with you in your nature? Has he not died for you? Surely, if I seem too great, and therefore too terrible for the grip of your faith, you may lay hold on the Well-beloved, your friend and kinsman; and you may see that I give him to be for me the pledge that I intend to keep the covenant of grace." Now, as long as there is a Christ, God's covenant evidently stands fast, for all the promises are "Yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us"; and until it can be proven that Christ has ceased to be, no man that believes in him is in any mortal danger. Hath he not said it, "Because I live ye shall live also"? The life of every believing man and woman is bound up with the very existence of Christ, as the gift of God, and that existence is divine as well as human; and unless he can cease to be he cannot cease to love, and bless, and keep his people, and be for them all that a high priest and surety can be. He is God's pledge to us that every word of promise shall stand.

But then mainly *he is a surety of the new covenant on our behalf.* Adam entered into a covenant with God for us, but that covenant went to pieces in a very short time. Then the second Adam became our covenant head and surety, and represented us before God. "Lo, I come," saith he—this is the brief of it—"to stand in their stead, to roll away the reproach of thy law, and so to save that which is lost." Now, the sinner is not saved in a way which casts a slight on justice, for Jesus has honoured the law, and borne its penalty on the behalf of the men whom the Father gave him. It was a wonderful act of grace on Christ's part thus to become our surety before the throne of justice, but he did, it and smarted for it, and fulfilled all that it involved. Beloved, I would not like to have gone to heaven over a broken law: no right-minded man could be eternally happy and yet know that the law of God had to be dishonoured before he could be rescued from hell. What would the universe say but that God was unrighteous, for he had saved the ungodly, and tarnished the honour of his justice by allowing sin to go unpunished: thus proving that the law was needless, and the punishment superfluous. But now they cannot thus speak concerning any one of us who are saved in Christ Jesus. The saved one's sins have been punished: every believer has borne the punishment of his guilt in the person of his great Substitute. The law is satisfied; we owe it nothing, for we have obeyed it actively and passively in the person of our surety. Even the infinite holiness of God can demand nothing of any believer but what the Lord beholds and accepts on the believer's behalf in Christ Jesus our representative. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? God that justifieth?" No, the very act of justifying proves that he cannot lay anything to our charge, for that would be to nullify his own act. "Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died?" What, condemn those for whom he has shed his atoning blood? Yea rather, Christ has risen again. Shall he condemn those whom he has justified by his resurrection? If so, he rose in vain. "Who sitteth at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Shall he condemn those for whom he has taken possession of

heaven, and for whom he offers perpetual intercession? Impossible! impossible! Our Surety then has rendered to the law the full of all its demands. Sing, O Zion; rejoice, O ye people of God, for God hath rendered unto you double for all your sins. In the person of your Substitute all that the law could demand has been exacted, and you are free. O blessed Melchisedec, high priest for ever living, we rejoice in thee as the surety of the covenant itself, and also the surety for both parties of that covenant, the guarantee on both sides, surety for God as thou art God, surety for man as thou art man, surety of the covenant as God-man in one divinely blessed person!

It comes to this, that we must believe in Jesus Christ and take him to be our priest, or be out of the covenant of grace. God will not deal with us without a Mediator, and "there is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Will you have him? Will you have him, or for ever be excluded from the covenant of grace, and consequently condemned under the covenant of works, and cast away for ever and ever? Will you, O unbelievers, will you despise the oath of God? I spoke of it with trembling just now, feeling a solemn awe at the very mention of the oath of God. Will you give the lie to that oath? Will you say, "Thou hast sworn to Christ that he shall be priest, but he shall never be mine"? This would be the honest expression of what your heart feels if you refuse Jesus: will you venture so to speak? Will you reject heaven's own appointed Saviour, and deny the witness of the Lord? See that ye do not this, for the Lord your God is a jealous God; and if you touch his dignity, so far as to strike at his oath, what more atrocious crime can you commit? "He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed on the Son of God." Will you refuse the ever-living Saviour? Is there one here so foolish as to be trusting to another priest? Oh, can it be that you are so far gone as to look to a man instead of looking to the Son of God?

Dear friends, if Christ deigns to be priest for us we ought gladly to accept him: there ought to be a rush at him. We are bound to cry, "Great priest, intercede for me: let thy sacrifice avail for me; wash me in the cleansing blood." It ought to be a joy to all mankind to accept this heaven-sent Priest and Surety. Will you refuse him? Will you neglect his salvation? If you do so, remember you shut yourselves out from the better hope, and the better covenant, and the better promises: you are barring the door of heaven against yourselves. He who rejects the Saviour commits eternal suicide: his blood shall be upon his own head. This shall be the hell of his hell, the very centre of its fire, the worm that never dieth, that he himself put from him everlasting life, and counted himself unworthy of the kingdom, and would not have Christ whom with an oath God had set up, that whosoever believeth in him might live. God bless these all-important truths to every heart for Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews viii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—427, 395, 383.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SUBSTANCE OF TRUE RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 15TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?"—Job xix. 28.

YOU will always understand a passage of Scripture better if you carefully attend to its connection. The habit of picking out portions from the Bible and separating them from their context may be carried a great deal too far, and in the process the reader may miss the mind of the Spirit, and force upon the words a meaning of his own. If we were to treat men's books as we do God's Book we should, probably, be judged to be insane. It is, indeed, a wonderful book to bear such mangling. Every sensible person will see that it must always be wise to study the context, for it is likely enough to cast a light upon the passage in hand. Job in the verse before us is answering Bildad the Shuhite. Now, this Bildad on two occasions had described Job as a hypocrite, and accounted for his dire distress by the fact that, though hypocrites may flourish for a time, they will ultimately be destroyed. In the two bitter speeches which he made he described the hypocrite under the figure of a tree which is torn up by the roots, or dies down even to the root. In his first address, in the eighth chapter and the sixteenth verse, he says of the hypocrite, "He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden. His roots are wrapped about the heap, and seeth the place of stones. If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee." Even the very root of the hypocrite was to be pulled up, so that the garden in which he once flourished should not remember that he had ever been there. Being much pleased with his metaphor, Bildad in the eighteenth chapter uses it again. He says in the fourteenth verse of the chapter, "His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off." This, then, was his mode of attacking Job: he set forth by the emblem of a tree the state and fate of the false hearted,—they might flourish for a time, but they would wither at last, even down to the very root, dried up and blasted by the justice of God. The inference he meant to draw was this: you, Job, are utterly dried up, for all your prosperity is gone, and therefore you must be a hypocrite. The No. 1,598.

assault was very cruel, but the sufferer successfully parried it. No, says Job, I am no hypocrite. I will prove it by your own words, for the root of the matter is still in me, and therefore I am no hypocrite. Though I admit that I have lost branch, and leaf, and fruit, and flower, yet I have not lost the root of the matter, for I hold the essential faith as firmly as ever; and, therefore, by your own argument, I am no hypocrite, and "Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?"

There is, then, dear friends, a something in true religion which is its essential root. It has fundamental matters which cannot be dispensed with under any circumstances. Some things pertain to godliness, are ornamental, useful, pleasant, and desirable, yet these may be absent and still there may be the truth of religion in the soul; but there is a something which cannot be absent in any case without its being certain that the man is not a true child of God; there is a something which is vital, without which there is no spiritual life. Of this essential thing we are going to speak this morning as we are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Job derived comfort from the fact that the root of the matter was in him, whatever his accusers might say, and I trust that others will be encouraged as they, too, shall find that the root of the matter is in them. It will be pleasant to my heart to cheer the fainting, and equally so if I can lead my stronger brethren to deal tenderly with such.

I. Our first thought will be that THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE CLEARLY DEFINED. We are not left in the dark as to what the essential point of true religion is: it can be laid down with absolute certainty. True, there has been considerable disputing over the phrase before us, and questions have been raised as to what Job meant by "the root of the matter," but I conceive that if we read the verse in its own connection, apart from any extraneous suggestion, there will be no doubt about its meaning. Commence at the twenty-fifth verse, and read on as Job spoke, and he tells us plainly what is "the root of the matter." Here it is: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." This knowledge of the Redeemer is evidently the root of the matter. Come, then, let us look more closely into this choice confession of faith. I shall not attempt to expound this golden utterance, but I shall glance at it with the one object of showing what Job considered to be the essence of true religion.

- And, first, it is clear that "the root of the matter" is firm *faith in the Redeemer*; it is to be able to say from the inmost heart, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth.*" Not I think so, but "*I know*"; for saving faith is certain, and the true believer is a positivist. Faith abhors conjectures, it will not put its foot down upon fictions, but rests upon matters of fact. Faith never deals in the fancy goods of opinion, theory, speculation, and probability; she searches for the priceless pearl of certainty; she must needs *know*. Such was the faith of Job, and he expresses it in firm, decided, clear language, saying—"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

This faith was an appropriating one, so that Job took to himself the Redeemer. "I know that *my* Redeemer liveth," laying hold upon the

Lord to be unto him all that he was meant to be, namely, a Redeemer who would set him at liberty from his misery. He embraced the Redeemer as his own, and believed that he would be raised by him from the pit of corruption. Come, brethren, have we such a faith as this? a faith which knows that there is a Saviour able to redeem and sure to accomplish the work? And do we take him for our own, saying—"my Redeemer"? This is the point—Do we accept him in his ordained office and cast our soul entirely upon him? Are we content to sink or swim with this God's appointed Saviour? If saved it shall be by him; and at his cross foot are we content to lie and wait the issue? Whatever other redeemers there may be, is the Lord Jesus *our* Redeemer in whom we trust as able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him? This is the "root of the matter;" a recognition of the redeeming Lord, and a simple dependence upon him for sure salvation.

Look steadily at the passage, and especially gaze into its original meaning, and you will see that in this "root of the matter" there is a recognition of the blessed Christ of God in the peculiar relationship which he has taken up to man. It is, "I know that my *goel*, or kinsman, liveth." You know what the next of kin was among the Jews: it was he who must redeem the inheritance if it had been alienated from the family: he was the guardian of those to whom he was next of kin. If there had been manslaughter committed, it was the *goel*, the near kinsman, who must take vengeance on behalf of the murdered man. The *goel* was the patron of the weak ones of the family, and the defender of the whole clan. Boaz was the redeemer of Ruth's patrimony, because he was her next of kin, after one other had refused to fulfil the office. Beloved, this is a cardinal point of saving faith, that Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God is next of kin to us poor, guilty men. His name is Emmanuel, God with us: not only God from before all worlds, but God with us in our nature. The Word was made flesh: Jesus was born at Bethlehem, and there he was nursed at the breast of a woman. He lived among our race, bearing our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. It is most sweet for faith to say—he is nearest of kin to *me*; my *goel*, my redeemer; bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—

"In ties of blood with sinners one."

He is the Head, the second Adam of our race, a brother born for adversity, yea, and more than a brother. Because he has deigned to enter into the closest of all relationships with us by taking upon himself our nature, the Lord Jesus has now become our Redeemer, bound to restore to those who are in him the inheritance which was forfeited by the fall. Glory be to his name, he has restored that which he took not away; he has redeemed from the hand of the enemy that which sin and Satan snatched from us by our first parents' fault. Nor is this all,—the *goel* was bound also to avenge the quarrel of his client. Our Lord is now our advocate with the Father, pleading our cause both by the word of his mouth and by the power of his arm. "Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul," O Jesus! Thou art my defender, my patron, my shield, and my exceeding great reward.

First, does it not mean that which is *essential*? "The root of the matter." To a tree a root is absolutely essential; it is a mere pole or piece of timber if there be no root. It can be a tree of a certain sort without branches, and at certain seasons without leaves, but not without a root. Look at the trees in the winter. Their substance is in them when they lose their leaves; the foliage has all fallen, but the bare boughs and stem still make a tree, because a root is there. You may call it a tree even though only the trunk remains rooted to the soil. But it is not a tree if you have taken the root away and set it up in the hedge—it is mere dead timber for the scaffold or the fire. So, if a man hath faith in the Redeemer, though he may be destitute of a thousand other most needful things, yet the essential point is settled: he that believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life. If he has faith he has the substance of things hoped for, and hope will turn to experience as he grows in grace; but if he has no faith in the Redeemer he may make a towering profession, he may possess vast knowledge, he may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and he may outstrip all his companions in zeal, but he is not a plant of the Lord's right hand planting, for he has no root in himself, and will ere long wither away.

The root, again, is not only that which is *vital* to the tree, it is from the root that the life-force proceeds by which the trunk and the branches are nourished and sustained. There is hope of a tree if it be cut down that it shall sprout again, at the scent of water it shall bud; so long as there is a root there is more or less of vitality and power to grow, and so faith in Christ is the vital point of religion; he that believeth liveth. If thou dost not know the living Redeemer thou dost not know life. Without trust in the work of Jesus a man may attempt to follow the moral teachings of Jesus, but he will miss salvation, since no morals which do not begin with faith in God can be acceptable to the Most High. The practical teaching of our holy religion is admirable, and we must obey it or be lost; but the root of holy living is faith in Christ, neither can it be produced otherwise. I would not say a word against the right exercise of the emotions, or the education of the understanding, or the regulation of the passions, for all these are good as branches of the tree; but the root, the living part of godliness, is our union to Christ by faith, our laying hold upon the incarnate Son of God as dying and rising again on our behalf.

Again, it is called the "root of the matter" because it *comprehends all the rest*; for everything is in the root. You walked your garden in the winter, and many plants were entirely invisible; there was not the slightest token of their presence in the soil: now they are above ground, they are flowering, they are proceeding to fruit. Where was the plant? It was all in the root. Leaf, branch, fruit, seed—all were there. Even so, all the elements of a perfect character lie hidden in faith in Christ. The holiness of heaven is packed away in the faith of a penitent sinner. Look at the crocus bulb; it is a poor, mean, unpromising sort of thing, and yet wrapped up within that brown package there lies a golden cup, which in the early spring will be filled with sunshine: you cannot see that wondrous chalice within the bulb; but he who put it there knows where he has concealed his treasure. The showers and the sun shall

unwrap the enfoldings, and forth shall come that dainty cup to be set upon God's great table of nature, as an intimation that the feast of summer is soon to come. The highest saintship on earth is hidden within the simplicity of a sinner's faith, like a flower within a seed: yea, the perfect character of those that are without fault before the throne of God is all in embryo within that first look of faith which links the soul with the atoning merits of the great Redeemer. My brother, a young heaven sleeps within thy childlike confidence in Christ: it will only want the culture of the Holy Spirit to develop thy new life into the perfect image of Christ Jesus thy Lord. Faith is the essence, the vitality, the sum of true godliness, and hence it is called "the root of the matter."

III. So I come, thirdly, to dwell upon a further remark:—THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER MAY BE PERSONALLY DISCERNED, AS BEING IN A MAN'S OWN POSSESSION. Job says to his teasing friends, "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" Notice the curious change of pronouns. "Ye should say, why persecute we *him*, seeing the root of the matter is found in *him*?" that is how the words would naturally run. But Job is so earnest to clear himself from Bildad's insinuation that he is a hypocrite that he will not speak of himself in the third person, but plainly declares, "The root of the matter is found in *me*." Job seems to say, "The vital part of the matter may or may not be in you, but it is in *me*, I know. You may not believe me, but I know it is so, and I tell you to your faces that no argument of yours can rob me of this confidence; for as I know that my Redeemer liveth, I know that the root of the matter is found in *me*." Many Christian people are afraid to speak in that fashion. They say, "I humbly hope it is so, and I trust it is so." That sounds prettily; but is it right? Is that the way in which men speak about their houses and lands? Do you possess a little freehold? Did I hear you answer, "I humbly hope that my house and garden are my own"? What, then, are your title-deeds so questionable that you do not *know*? Is this the way in which you speak of your wages at the end of the week? "I sometimes have a hope that those shillings are mine." Is that the way you talk about your wife? Is that the manner in which you speak of your own life? Are you afraid even to call your soul your own? No, no; we demand certainties in reference to things of value, and so it ought to be with regard to Christ and eternity; we cannot put up with mere hopes and surmises in reference to them. Believers should aim at certainty about eternal things, and learn to say, like Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and, "The root of the matter is found in me."

Note well that *sometimes this root needs to be searched for*. Job says "the root of the matter is found in me," as if he had looked for it, and made a discovery of what else had been hidden. Roots generally lie underground and out of sight, and so may our faith in the Redeemer. His interest in the Redeemer may have been a question for self-examination with Job when first his griefs came thick and heavy; it may be a matter of search with us, too.

"He that never doubted of his state,
He may—perhaps he may, too late."

I can understand a Christian doubting whether he is saved or not, but I cannot understand his being happy while he continues to doubt about it, nor happy at all till he is sure of it. Job had made his personal condition the subject of investigation; he had digged beneath the surface, and had seen within his heart. You cannot always find roots in winter time, unless you use a spade and turn over the soil: there are winter times with us when we cannot tell whether we have real faith in Christ or not till we examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. After searching, Job found the treasure, and said, "the root of the matter is found in me."

And note again, the root of the matter in Job was *an inward thing*. "The root of the matter is found *in* me." He did not say, "I wear the outward garb of a religious man;" no, but, "the root of the matter is found *in* me." If you, my hearers, are in the possession of the essence of true Christianity, it does not lie in your outward profession, your baptism, your church-membership, or your reception of the Lord's Supper; but it lies within your heart and mind. Faith, which is the evidence of the inner life, is altogether spiritual and inward; its abode is within the vitals of the spiritual being, in the very core of the renewed heart. True godliness is not separable from the godly man; it is woven into him just as a thread enters into the essence and substance of the fabric.

When grace is found in us, and we do really believe in our Redeemer, *we ought to avow it*; for Job says, "The root of the matter is found in me. I know that my Redeemer liveth." Are there not some among you who have never said as much as that? Some of you who are believers have never yet owned your Lord. What did I call some of you the other day? I think I compared cowardly believers to rats behind the wainscot that come out of a night to eat a crumb or two, and then run in again. The rat is a poor creature to be compared with: it is a domestic animal, I suppose, for it lives in the house; but it is not a beautiful object to be likened to, and so I will not compare you to it, although there might be more untruthful comparisons. I pray you try and alter before I am driven to the simile, and never be ashamed of Christ, or if you ever are so, be more ashamed of yourselves. There ought to be an open declaration of our faith whenever it is needful, for it is written, "Be ye always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

The fact of our having the root of the matter in us *will be a great comfort to us*. "Alas," saith Job, "my servant will not come when I call him, my wife is strange to me, my kinsfolk fail me, but I know that my Redeemer liveth. Bildad and Zophar, and others of them, all condemn me, but my conscience acquits me, for I know that the root of the matter is in me." It is a blessed thing to be able to hear the harsh speeches of men as though we heard them not. What matters it after all what others judge of me if I know what I do know, and am sure in my own soul that I am right with God? What if men find fault with our eyes does it signify if we can say, "One thing I know, whereas I was once blind now I see." Critics may find fault with our experience, and they may call our earnest utterances rant, but this will not affect the truth of our conversion, or the acceptableness of our testimony

for Jesus. If the little bird within our bosom sings sweetly it is of small consequence if all the owls in the world hoot at us.

There is more real comfort in the possession of simple faith than in the fond persuasion that you are in a high state of grace. When we proudly think, "Oh, I need not look at the root of the matter, for my flowers and fruits are evidence more than sufficient," we are getting dangerously elevated. That man is in a perilous plight who glories in himself, saying, "How useful I am! how gifted! how influential! How highly my brethren think of me!" All this will turn out to be unsubstantial comfort in the hour of trial, but the root of the matter yields the sweetest and surest consolation at all times. If your Redeemer lives you shall have a candle lighted for you in the darkest shades.

This fact also will be *your defence against opposers*. Thus may you answer them in Job's fashion, "You ought not to condemn me; for, though I am not what I ought to be, or what I want to be, or what I shall be, yet still the root of the matter is found in me. Be kind to me, therefore." Carefully observe this, my dear young friends. You have been lately converted, and if you fall in with those who are very stern and censorious you must not be surprised. Some venerable professors have not so much grown ripe as sour, and they show their sourness by censuring their younger brethren. It does not occur to them to say, "Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is in him?" But you may defend yourself against their hard speeches by declaring that you believe in the Saviour even as they do. Say to them, "I do not know as much about the Lord Jesus as you do, but I most heartily trust him. He is as much my Redeemer as he is yours. Do not, therefore, drive me from your company, but deal gently with me, as with a lamb of the flock." I hope that you who are now young and timid will become strong in the Lord ere long, and be no longer in danger from severe judgments, and when that comes about I hope that you will have learned by experience to be very gentle with those who are weak in the faith. If our friends are sincere in their attachment to the Redeemer let us treat them as our brethren in Christ.

Thus much on our third point.

IV. Now we come to the fourth subject of discourse, which is a practical lesson from the text for those believers in Christ who have passed beyond the root stage into a further development.

Notice, then, that THIS ROOT OF THE MATTER IS TO BE TENDERLY RESPECTED BY ALL WHO SEE IT. "Ye should say, why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?"

What a rebuke this is to the *persecutions* which have been carried on by nominal Christians against each other, sect against sect! Romanists have fiercely persecuted Protestants, and Protestants have persecuted one another. If they had but listened to their gracious Lord and Saviour they would have heard him whisper, "Ye should say, wherefore persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?" How can those who trust in the same Saviour rend and devour each other? In many of the islands of the South Seas our missionaries have been the means of converting the people to the faith. In one of these the shaven crowns of Rome began to put in their appearance, with the view of turning away the people from the faith to the errors of Rome.

Among their cunning instruments of conversion was a picture representing the tree of the church. Certain twigs were represented as rotten; they were cut off, and were falling into the fire: these were such persons as Luther, Calvin, and other famous teachers of the gospel. The Protestant missionaries, too, were dead twigs, and were all to be removed from the tree. The natives were not quite sure about this, and made more enquiries. Certain other branches were green and vigorous; these were the priests of the Catholic church, and the larger boughs were bishops and cardinals of the same community: the natives were not quite clear about that, and passed on to examine the trunk. This of course consisted of an array of popes, of whom the islanders had never heard. They passed on, hoping to come to something presently; and so they did, for at the bottom was the name of our Lord Jesus. The enquiring islanders said, "And what is this at the bottom, marked with the name of Jesus?" "That is the root," said the priest. "Well, then," shouted the natives, "we have the root! The new teachers say we have the root, and so we are all right; our missionaries have told us the truth." There was philosophy in that. Let us see to it that "we have the root." Friend, dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God? If so, thou hast the root. I shall be very sorry if you belong to the Church of Rome, for she teaches much error; but if you rest wholly in Christ Jesus you will be saved. Do you believe in the once crucified but now living Christ? Well, my brother, I am sorry you should be a high-churchman, or anything else which is not according to Scripture, but your faith has saved you. I pray you think the same of me, if I too am a believer in the one Redeemer. If I believe, and rest my soul on the one salvation which God has provided in Christ Jesus, have charity towards me, for this rock will bear both thee and me. This should end all religious persecutions.

But next it ought to be the end of all *ungenerous denunciations*. If I know that a man is really believing in Jesus Christ, I may not treat him as an enemy. If I perceive that he holds a great many wrong notions, I am to be grieved at his mistakes, and to labour for his instruction, but I ought not to feel rancour towards him. It is my duty, especially if I am a public instructor, to expose and refute his errors; but as for the man himself, if he trusts in the atoning blood, I am not to treat him as a reprobate. Does he believe in Jesus Christ alone? Does he hold vital, fundamental truth, then I am not to make him an offender for a word, and twist his language into a meaning what he never intended by it. I am too near akin to every believer in Jesus to take down bell, book, and candle and excommunicate him for not being so well-instructed as he might be. If the Redeemer is next of kin to me and next of kin to him, why then we are near of kin to one another, and it is unseemly for us to strive together being brethren. For the faith and against all errors we are bound to contend, but anything like personal animosity must be far from us. O for more Christian love! If the root of the matter is in any man, do not let us persecute him, but encourage him. "Well, but I could not enter into any Christian work with him, nor enjoy fellowship with him, for he does not see with me." Is it indeed so? The Lord have pity upon you. I should not wonder but what you are the worse man of the two: he may be wrong in head, but you are certainly wrong in heart. Very frequently it happens that the man who

has most of the spirit of love is also the man who is nearest to the truth, and I generally assume that he who is the least sour is the most sound. The party who most needs to be questioned as to whether the root of the matter is in him is the brother who has no love. He whose spirit is perfumed with love to others, not only has the root but something of branch too, for love is the fair outgrowth of faith. Death to error, death to sin, but salvation to the sinner and life to the believer, notwithstanding all his mistakes. Let denunciations and exclusiveness be ended for ever, and let us own our kinship with all who are in Christ.

Further than this, the question is, "Why persecute we him?" We can do that by a *cold mistrust*. I have seen chill suspicion exercised by good solid substantial Christians, who have had a chronic fear and trembling lest new converts should not be true converts. The young man seems to be very earnest; he is evidently much impressed; he forsakes his sin, and there is a great change in him; he boldly declares his faith in Jesus Christ; but the jealous guardian of the purity of the church objects, for the young man was converted in an irregular way; he did not go among the Presbyterians or Baptists, or Congregationalists, or Evangelical Church people and get saved in a respectable manner, but he went out in the street and he heard a mere ranter, or a salvation army captain, and therefore it is feared that it cannot be a genuine work of grace. The cautious brother does not *say* much, but he draws himself into himself and retires from the person whom he suspects, just as a snail draws in his horns and hides himself in his shell. The elder brother is angry and will not go in; and in that way he persecutes the returning prodigal. Why, some of these icy critics will cause the very marrow of a poor fellow's bones to freeze while he looks at him. Do not let us stand off in holy isolation from any who have the root of the matter in them. Wherefore should we persecute such? Let us encourage them, and give them information upon the points in which they are deficient. Some people appear to think that every convert ought to be born a fully developed man in Christ Jesus, even as, according to mythology, Minerva sprang from the brain of Jove, a full length woman, fully armed, shield and spear and all. I do not see people born again in this fashion. I believe that some of God's men who are to be leaders are born with beards, and very early exhibit a knowledge far beyond their years, which sets them in the front from the first; but for the most part God's children are little when they are born, even as ours are. When my sons first came to my house they were by no means the young men they are now. I should think it likely that the same may be said of your children; what wonder, then, that it is so in God's house! Little children cannot run alone, and cannot even speak plain. Besides, they make strange noises, and by their cries they become a nuisance to those who have no sympathy with babes; and so it is with new-born Christians, they cannot run as we could wish them to, and they cannot tell out the doctrines of grace as we could desire, or pray as we should like them to pray. Well, but they are little children. They are alive, however. Do not let us bury them, but let us nurse them. It is one of the duties of mature Christian life to take this child and nurse it for God, for he will give us our wages.

Dear brothers and sisters, I beg you to be on the look out in this congregation for those who have just received the root of the matter, those that have just had the seed dropped into the soul. It has hardly begun to sprout yet, but you can see it is there. They can just say—

“We are poor sinners, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is our all in all.”

Do not frighten them, do not distress them, do not chill them like a sharp frost. Cheer and encourage them, and say, “I, too, was once as you are. Ay, and I, too, often am as you are. Ay, and I, too, sometimes wish I were as you are, for I would still keep on my knees, keep humbly dependent upon Christ. Come, if elder brethren will not receive you, I will, and I will cheer you and encourage you for Jesus’ sake.”

Well, try and do that this morning, if you can, before you leave the Tabernacle. There may be somebody sitting next to you who just wants a word. Try it. I know some will be quite frightened at your venturing to speak to them. Very well, frighten them a little, it will not hurt them. Try the power of courteous personal appeal. It may be if you frighten one or two you will be the means of blessing so many more that if those who are frightened do not forgive you they will not break your heart. God himself will not, because there will be nothing to forgive. He will commend you for what you have done, and I pray you, therefore, do it for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Job xix., Psalm xcii.

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A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 22ND, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God."—Galatians ii. 20.

I AM not about to preach from this whole verse, for I have done that before: this single sentence will suffice me. I shall not attempt to enter into the fulness of the spiritual meaning of this very deep and fruitful passage; I am merely going to bring out one thought from it, and to try to work that out, I trust, to practical ends. It has sometimes been objected to the preaching of the gospel, that we exhort men to live for another sphere, and do not teach them to live well in the present life. Nothing can be more untrue than this: I venture to say that more practical moral teaching is given by ministers of the gospel than by all the philosophers, lecturers, and moralists put together. While we count ourselves to be ordained to speak of something higher than mere morals, we nevertheless, nay, and for that very reason, inculcate the purest code of duty, and lay down the soundest rules of conduct. It would be a great pity, dear brethren, if in the process of being qualified for the next life we became disqualified for this; but it is not so. It would be a very strange thing if, in order to be fit for the company of angels, we should grow unfit to associate with men; but it is not so. It would be a singular circumstance if those who speak of heaven had nothing to say concerning the way thither; but it is not so. The calumny is almost too stale to need a new denial. My brethren, true religion has as much to do with this world as with the world to come; it is always urging us onward to the higher and better life; but it does so by processes and precepts which fit us worthily to spend our days while here below. Godliness prepares us for the life which follows the laying down of this mortal flesh; but as Paul tells us in the text, it moulds the life which we now live in the flesh. Faith is a principle for present use; see how it has triumphed in ordinary life according to the record of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Godliness with contentment is great gain: it hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. The sphere of faith is earth and heaven, time and eternity; the sweep of its circle takes in the whole of our being—spirit

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soul, and body; it comprehends the past and the future, and it certainly does not omit the present. With the things that now are the faith of Christians has to do; and it is concerning the life that we now live in the flesh that I shall now speak, trying, by the help of God's Spirit, to show the influence which faith has upon it.

There are seven points in which faith in him who loved us and gave himself for us will have a distinct influence upon the life which we now live in the flesh.

I. To begin. **FAITH INCLINES A MAN TO AN INDUSTRIOUS LIFE.** *It suggests activity.* I will venture to say of any lazy man that he has little or no faith in God; for faith always worketh,—“worketh by love.” I lay it down as a thesis which shall be proved by observation that a believing man becomes an active man, or else it is because he cannot act, and, therefore, what would have been activity runs into the channel of patience, and he endures with resignation the will of the Most High. He who does nothing believes nothing—that is to say, in reality and in truth. Faith is but an empty show if it produces no result upon the life. If a professor manifests no energy, no industry, no zeal, no perseverance, no endeavour to serve God, there is cause gravely to question whether he is a believer at all. It is a mark of faith that, whenever it comes into the soul, even in its lowest degree, it suggests activity. Look at the prodigal, and note his early desires. The life of grace begins to gleam into his spirit, and its first effect is the confession of sin. He cries, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” But what is the second effect? He desires to be doing something. “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” Having nothing to do had helped to make him the prodigal he was. He had wasted his substance in riotous idleness, seeking enjoyment without employment. He had plunged into the foulest vices because he was master of money but not master of himself. It was not an ill thing for him when he was sent into the fields to feed swine: the company which he met with at the swine trough was better than that which he had kept at his banquets. One of the signs of the return of his soul's sanity was his willingness to work, although it might be only as a menial servant in his father's house. In actual history observe how Saul of Tarsus, even before he had found peaceful faith in Christ, cried, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Faith arouses the soul to action. It is the first question of believing anxiety, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” Hence faith is such a useful thing to men in the labour and travail of this mortal life, because it puts them into motion and supplies them with a motive for work. Faith does not permit men to lie upon the bed of the sluggard, listless, frivolous, idle; but it makes life to appear real and earnest, and so girds the loins for the race.

Everyone should follow an honourable vocation. It was a rule of the old church, and it ought to be one of the present—“If any man will not work neither let him eat.” It is good for us all to have something to do, and plenty of it. When man was perfect God placed him in a paradise, but not in a dormitory. He set him in the garden to “dress it and to keep it.” It would not have been a happy place for Adam if he had had nothing to do but to smell the roses and gaze at the flowers: work

was as essential to the perfect man as it is to us, though it was not of the kind which brings sweat to the face or weariness to the limbs. In the garden of grace faith is set to a happy service, and never wishes to be otherwise than occupied for her Lord.

The text says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God." Does faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him, suggest to the redeemed man that he should be industrious and active? Assuredly it does; for it sets the divine Saviour before him as an example, and where was there ever one who worked as Jesus did? In his early youth he said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" He was no loitering heir of a gentleman, but the toiling son of a carpenter. In after life it was his meat and his drink to do the will of him that sent him. He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." His was stern labour and sore travail: the zeal of God's house did eat him up, and the intensity of love consumed him. He worked on until he could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Now, it is no small thing for a man to be roused by such an example, and to be made a partaker of such a spirit.

True faith in him who loved us, and gave himself for us, also *seeks direction* of the Lord as to the sphere of its action, and waits upon him to be guided by him in the choice of a calling. This part of our discourse may be useful to young persons who have not settled upon what they are to do in life. Faith is a great service to us here. Much depends upon the choice of our pursuits. Very grievous mistakes have been made here—as grievous mistakes as if a bird in the air should have undertaken the pursuits of a fish, or a labouring ox should have entered into competition with a race-horse. Some people are trying to do what they were never made for, ambitious beyond their line. This is a grievous evil. There should, therefore, be a seeking unto God for guidance and direction; and faith leads us to such seeking. This prayer may be used in many senses: "Show me what thou wouldest have me to do." In the choice of a calling faith helps a Christian to refuse that which is the most lucrative if it be attended with a questionable morality. If the Christian could have huge purses of that gold which is coined out of the drunkenness, the lust, or the ungodliness of men, he would scorn to put them among his stores. Trades which are injurious to men's minds and hearts are not lawful callings before God. Dishonest gain is awful loss. Gold gained by deceit or oppression shall burn into the soul of its owner as the fire of hell. "Make money," said the worldling to his son; "make it honestly if you can, but, anyhow, make money." Faith abhors this precept of Mammon, and having God's providence for its inheritance, it scorns the devil's bribe. Choose no calling over which you cannot ask God's blessing, or you will be acting contrary to the law of faith. If you cannot conceive of the Lord Jesus wishing you success in a certain line of trade, do not touch it. If it is not possible to think of your Lord as smiling upon you in your daily calling, then your calling is not fit for a Christian to follow.

Callings should be deliberately chosen with a view to our own suitability for them. Faith watches the design of God, and desires to act according to his intent. It had been ill for David to have lived in

retirement, or for the prophet Nathan to have aspired to the throne. The law of the kingdom is—"Every man in his own order"; or in other words, "Every man according to his several ability." If the Lord has given us one talent let us use it in its own market; or if two, or five, let us trade with them where they can be most profitably employed, so that we may be found faithful servants in the day of the Master's coming.

We should also by faith desire such a calling as Providence evidently has arranged and intended for us. Some persons have never had a free choice of what vocation they would follow; for from their birth, position, surroundings, and connections they are set in a certain line of things, like carriages on the tram lines, and they must follow on the appointed track, or stand still. Faith expects to hear the voice behind it saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Trusting to our own judgment often means following our own whims; but faith seeks direction from infallible wisdom, and so it is led in a right way. God knows your capacity better than you do; entreat him to choose your inheritance for you. If the flowers were to revolt against the gardener, and each one should select its own soil, most of them would pine and die through their unsuitable position; but he who has studied their nature knows that this flower needs shade and damp; and another needs sunlight and a light soil; and so he puts his plants where they are most likely to flourish. God doeth the same with us. He hath made some to be kings, though few of those plants flourish much. He has made many to be poor, and the soil of poverty, though damp and cold, has produced many a glorious harvest for the great Reaper. The Lord has set some in places of peril, places from which they would gladly escape, but they are there preserved by his hand; he has planted many others in the quiet shade of obscurity, and they blossom to the praise of the great Husbandman.

So, then, you see, faith has much to do with the force and direction of our life in the flesh. It provides impetus by giving a man something to live for; it shows him the far-reaching influences of the thoughts and deeds of to-day, and how they issue in eternal results; and faith also takes the helm and steers the vessel along a safe channel towards the haven of holy rest. Happy are they who in the early days of their youth believe in him who loved them and gave himself for them, and so begin their life-walk with Jesus. Blessed be God for converting some of us while we were yet boys and girls. O happy young people, who begin life with the early dew of grace upon them! No prince of eastern empires was ever so richly bejewelled! You will not in after-days have to lament a score years spent in error, or half a life wasted in sin, or a whole seventy years frittered away in idleness. O that you, who are yet young, who have the world before you, may now be led by the Spirit to follow Christ, who pleased not himself but did the will of his Father, so shall the life that you live in the flesh be lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved you and gave himself for you.

II. Secondly, FAITH LEADS A MAN TO LOOK TO GOD FOR HELP IN HIS ORDINARY AVOCATION. Here, again, it has a great influence over him. A believer may seek of God the *qualifications* for his particular calling. "What," say you, "may we pray about such things?" Yes. The labourer may appeal to God for strength; the artisan may ask God for skill; the student may seek God for help to quicken his intelligence.

David was a great warrior, and he attributed his valour to God who taught his hands to war and his fingers to fight. We read of Bezaleel, and of the women that were wise-hearted, that God had taught them, so that they made all manner of embroidery and metal work for the house of the Lord. In those days they used to reckon skill and invention to be the gifts of God; this wretched century has grown too wise to honour any God but its own idolized self. If you pray over your work I am persuaded you will be helped in it. If for your calling you are as yet but slenderly qualified, you may every morning pray God to help you that you may be careful and observant as an apprentice or a beginner; for has he not promised that as your day your strength shall be? A mind which is trusting in the Lord is in the best condition for acquiring knowledge, and getting understanding.

As to your *behaviour* also in your work, there is room for faith and prayer. For, O brethren, whether qualified or not for any particular offices of this life, our conduct is the most important matter. It is well to be clever, but it is essential to be pure. I would have you masters of your trades, but I am even more earnest that you should be honest, truthful, and holy. About this we may confidently go to God and ask him to lead us in a plain path, and to hold up our goings that we slip not. He can and will help us to behave ourselves wisely. "Lead us not into temptation" is one sentence of our daily prayer, and we may further ask that when we are in the temptation we may be delivered from the evil. We need prudence, and faith remembers that if any lack wisdom he may ask of God. Godliness teaches the young men prudence, the babes knowledge and discretion. See how Joseph prospered in Egypt because the Lord was with him. He was placed in very difficult positions, on one occasion in a position of the most terrible danger, but he escaped by saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" A sense of God's presence preserved him then and at all other times. He was set over all the house of Potiphar because God was with him. And so, dear friends, engaged in service or in business, you may go to your heavenly Father and ask him to guide you with his counsel, and you may rest assured that he will order all your way, so that your daily calling shall not hinder your heavenly calling, nor your conduct belie your profession.

Faith bids you seek help from God as to the *success* of your daily calling. Know ye not what David says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep." It is a most pleasant thing to be able by faith to consult the holy oracle about everything, whether it arises in trade, or in the family, or in the church. We may say with Abraham's servant, "O Lord, I pray thee send me good speed this day." You may expect success if you thus seek it: and peradventure some of you would have prospered more if you had more believingly sought the Lord. I say "peradventure," because God does not always prosper even his own people in outward things, since it is sometimes better for their souls that they should be in adversity, and then the highest prosperity is a want of prosperity. Faith quiets the heart in this matter by enabling us to leave results in the hand of God.

Faith acts also in reference to our *surroundings*. We are all very

much influenced by those about us. God can raise us up friends who will be eminently helpful to us, and we may pray him to do so: he can put us into a circle of society in which we shall find much assistance in this life's affairs, and also in our progress towards heaven; and concerning this we know that "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." Faith will keep you clear of evil company, and constrain you to seek the society of the excellent of this earth, and thus it will colour your whole life. If there be no friends to help him, the believer's dependence is so fixed upon God, that he goes forward in cheerful confidence knowing that the Lord alone is sufficient for him; yet, if he be encouraged and assisted by friends, he looks upon it as God's doing, as much as when David was strengthened by those who came to him in the cave.

Do you say, We see the connection of this with faith, but how with faith upon the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us? I answer,—Our Saviour as the object of our faith is also the object of our imitation; and you know, brethren, how in all things he rested upon God. Whenever he undertook a great enterprise you find him spending a night in prayer: If anybody could have dispensed with prayer it was our Lord Jesus; if any man that ever lived could have found his own way without heavenly guidance it was Christ the Son of God. If then he was much in prayer and exercised faith in the great Father, much more should you and I bring everything before God. We should live in the flesh expecting that the Lord Jesus will be with us even to the end, and that we shall be upheld and comforted by his sympathetic love and tenderness. Faith enables us to follow Jesus as the great Shepherd of the sheep, and to expect to be led in a right way, and daily upheld and sustained until the Redeemer shall come to receive us unto himself.

III. Thirdly, faith exercises a power over a man's life of a remarkable kind because IT LEADS HIM TO SERVE GOD IN HIS DAILY CALLING. Never is life more ennobled than when we do all things as unto God. This makes drudgery sublime, and links the poorest menial with the brightest angel. Seraphs serve God in heaven, and you and I may serve him in the pulpit or in the kitchen, and be as accepted as they are. Brethren, Christian men are helped by faith to serve God in their calling *by obedience to God's commands*, by endeavouring to order everything according to the rules of love to God and love to men. In such a case integrity and uprightness preserve the man, and his business becomes true worship. Though there be no straining after eccentric unworldliness and superstitious singularity, yet in doing that which is right and just, the common tradesman is separated unto the service of the Lord. Jesus says, "If any man serve me let him follow me," as much as to say that obedience to the divine command is the true mode of showing love to Jesus. If thou wishest to do something great for God, be greatly careful to obey his commands: for "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."

Godly men exercise faith in God in their callings by trying to manifest a *Christian spirit* in all that they do. The spirit which actuates us may seem to be a small matter so long as we are outwardly right; but it is in reality the essence of the whole thing. Take away the flavour from the fruit, or the fragrance from the flower, and what is left? such is

correct living without the savour of grace. The same thing can be done in several ways: you can do a right thing in so wrong a way as to make it wrong. Even in giving to the poor, a churl will trample upon their feelings in the very act of his charity; while I have known others who have been unable to give who, nevertheless, have expressed their inability in so kindly a form that they have comforted the disappointed applicant. Oh, to act in your trade and your calling as Christ would have acted had he been in your place. Hang that question up in your houses, "What would Jesus do?" and then think of another, "How would Jesus do it?" for what he would do, and how he would do it, may always stand as the best guide to us. Thus faith puts a man upon serving God by leading him to exhibit the spirit of Christ in what he ordinarily does, showing all courtesy, gentleness, forbearance, charity, and grace.

Furthermore, in all that we do, we should be *aiming at God's glory*. We should do everything as unto God, and not unto men. There would be no eye-service if we left off being men pleasers and began to please God. Neither would there be impatience under injustice; for if men do not accept our service when we have done it with all our hearts, we shall comfort ourselves with the reflection that our Master in heaven knows how little we deserve the unrighteous censure. To live as kings and priests unto God is the cream of living. Then will you be the Lord's free men. Serve God in serving men, and serve men by serving God: there is a way of working out those two sentences even to the full, and thus rendering life sublime. May God the Holy Spirit teach us to do this. If we really live to serve God we shall live intensely day by day, allowing no time to waste. Sophia Cook sought Mr. Wesley's counsel as to what she should do in life, and he answered, "Live to-day": a very short direction, but one that is full of wisdom. "Live to-day," and to-morrow you may do the same. Plans for the whole term of life many of you may not be able to construct, but mind that you work while it is called to-day. "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard" is the great Father's word. How would a man live if he felt that he was specially to live for God *this day*? Suppose that to-day there was a vow upon you, or some other bond, by which you felt that this whole day was solemnly consecrated to the Lord; how would you behave yourself? So ought you to behave this day, and every day; for you belong wholly to him who loved you, and gave himself for you. Let the love of Christ constrain us in this matter: let us put on the yoke of Christ, and feel at once that we are his blood-bought possession, and his servants for ever, because by faith he has become ours and we are his. We ought to live as Christ's men in every little as well as in every great matter; whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do all to the glory of God, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Christ Jesus. Thus, you see, faith in him who gave himself for us leads us to spend our energies in his service, and to do our ordinary work with an eye to his glory, and so our life is coloured and savoured by our faith in the Son of God.

IV.: Fourthly, faith has a very beneficial influence upon the life that we live in the flesh, for IT RECONCILES A MAN TO THE DISCOMFORTS OF HIS CALLING. It is not every calling that is easy or lucrative, or honoured among men. It is a happy circumstance when a man has espoused a

business which is so congenial with his taste that he would not change for another if he could : but some find their trades irksome to the. This is an evil under the sun. Some employments are despised by the thoughtless, and involve much self-denial, and hence those who follow them need much faith to enable them to live above the trials of the position. Faith teaches the humble worker to see Jesus in all his lowliness, condescending to take upon himself the form of a servant for our sakes. Faith reads, "Jesus, knowing that he came forth from God and went to God, took a towel, and girded himself, and washed his disciples' feet." That was one of the most menial of employments, and if our Lord and Master did not disdain it why should we be ashamed of the humblest form of service? From henceforth let no man trouble you but rejoice because the poor man's Saviour was a servant even as you are, and he too was "despised and rejected of men."

Your faith ought to help you by arousing your gratitude for deliverance from a far worse drudgery. You did for Satan things of which you are now ashamed. Any work for the devil, and for his black cause, would be dishonourable: to rule an empire for Satan would disgrace us; to wear the crown put on our heads by sinning would be a horrible curse but to wash feet for Christ is glorious service. There is no degradation in anything that is done for God. Faith in God sanctifies the man, and his calling, too, and makes it pleasant to him to carry the cross of Christ in his daily labour. There are some who hold their heads high, who nevertheless, do things that are disgraceful to humanity, but surely you and I ought never to think anything a hardship which falls to our lot by the appointment of divine providence.

Faith is a great teacher of humility; for it bids us think little of ourselves, and rest alone in God; and because it fosters humility it renders a man's task pleasant when else it would be irksome. Pride makes a man stiff in the back: there are some works which he cannot do though he would be happy enough in doing them if he had not such foolish ideas of his own importance. Hard work is no disgrace to any man; it is far more degrading to be leading the life of a fashionable do-nothing. When the Lord makes us feel that we are poor, undeserving creatures we do not mind taking the lowest room, or doing the meanest work, for we feel that as long as we are out of hell and have a hope of heaven, the meanest service is an honour to us. We are glad enough to be where God would have us be, seeing Christ has loved us and given himself for us.

Faith also removes discomforts by reminding us that they will not last long. Faith says of trial, "Bear it! The time is short. Soon thy Saviour cometh, and the poorest of his followers shall then reign with him." Toil on, O weary one, for the morning light will put an end to thy labour, which lasts only through the hours of darkness. The glory breaks; the night is wearing away, and the dawn appeareth. Therefore patiently wait and quietly hope, for thou shalt see the salvation of God. Thus faith takes the thorns from our pillow, and makes us learn in what soever state we are therewith to be content. Call you this nothing? Has not Jesus done much for us when by faith in him we have learned to endure the ills of life with sweet content?

W. Fifthly, faith has this further influence upon ordinary life—THAT

IT CASTS ALL THE BURDEN OF IT UPON THE LORD. Faith is the great remover of yokes, and it does this in part by making us submissive to God's will. When we have learned to submit we cease to repine. Faith teaches us so to believe in God, infallible wisdom and perfect love, that we consent unto the Lord's will and rejoice in it. Faith teaches us to look to the end of every present trial, and to know that it works together for good; thus again reconciling us to the passing grief which it causes. Faith teaches us to depend upon the power of God to help us in the trial, and through the trial, and in this way we are no longer stumbled by afflictions, but rise above them as on eagles' wings. Brethren, if any of you are anxious, careworn, and worried, stop not in such a state of mind; it cannot do you any good; and it reflects no honour upon your great Father. Pray for more faith, that you may have no back-breaking load to carry, but may transfer it to the great Burden-bearer. Pray to your great Lord so to strengthen and ease your heart that your only care may be to please him, and that you may be released from all other care. By this means will you be greatly helped, for if the burden be lightened, it comes to much the same thing as if the strength were multiplied. Content with the divine will is better than increase of riches, or removal of affliction, for with wealth no peace may come; and out of prosperity no joy in the Lord may arise, but contentment is peace itself.

Whatever burden faith finds in her daily avocation she casts it upon God by prayer. We begin with God in the morning, seeking help to do our work, and to do it well. At his hands we seek guidance and prosperity from hour to hour. We pray him to prevent our doing any wrong to others, or suffering any wrong from them; and we ask him to keep our temper and to preserve our spirit while we are with worldly men. We beg that we may not be infected by the evil example of others, and that our example may be such as may be safely followed. These are our great concerns in business; we tremble lest in anything we should dishonour God, and we trust in him to keep us. A believer goes to God with the matters of each day, and looks for the morning dew to fall upon him; he looks up through the day expecting the Lord to be his constant shield, and at night ere he goes to rest he empties out the gathered troubles of the day, and so falls to a happy sleep. Then doth a man live sweetly when he lives by the day, trusting his Lord with everything, and finding God to be ever near.

To all this the example of the Saviour leads us, and his love within our hearts draws us. "He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him," and "was heard in that he feared."

VI. Sixthly, faith hath a happy influence upon the present life, for IT MODERATES A MAN'S FEELINGS AS TO THE RESULT OF HIS WORK. Sometimes the result of our work is prosperity, and here the grace of God prevents a surfeit of worldly things. There is a keen test of character in prosperity. Everybody longs for it, but it is not every man that can bear it when it comes. True faith forbids our setting great store by worldly goods and pleasures and enjoyments, for it teaches us that our treasure is in heaven. If we begin to idolize the things that are seen, we shall soon degenerate and turn aside from God. How easily we may spoil a blessing! Two friends gathered each a rose: the one was continually smelling at it, touching its leaves and handling it as if he could

not hold it too fast; you do not wonder that it was soon withered. The other took his rose, enjoyed its perfume moderately, carried it in his hand for a while, and then placed it on the table in water, and hours after it was almost as fresh as when it was plucked from the bough. We may dote on our worldly gear until God becomes jealous of it, and sends a blight upon it; and, on the other hand, we may with holy moderateness use these things as not abusing them, and get from them the utmost good which they are capable of conveying to us. Many pursue wealth or fame as some eager boy hunts the painted butterfly: at last, after a long and weary run, he dashes it down with his cap, and with the stroke he spoils its beauty. Many a man hath reached the summit of a life-long ambition and found it to be mere vanity. In gaining all he has lost all; wealth has come, but the power to enjoy it has gone; life has been worn out in the pursuit, and no strength is left with which to enjoy the gain. It shall not be so with the man who lives by faith, for his chief joys are above, and his comfort lies within. To him God is joy so rich that other joy is comparatively flavourless.

But perchance the result of all our work may be adversity. Some men row very hard, and yet their boat makes no headway. When an opportunity presents itself the tide of trade suddenly turns against them. When they have corn in the mill the wind does not blow. Perhaps they lose all but their character, and then it is that faith comes in to cheer them under the disaster. I am deeply grieved when I hear of persons committing suicide because they were in difficulties: it is a dreadful thing thus to rush before one's Creator unbidden. Faith sustains the heart and puts aside all thought of such desperate attempts to fly from present griefs by plunging into far more awful woes. We shall bear up and come through our trials triumphantly if we have faith in God. If our heavenly Father has appointed a bitter cup for us shall we not drink it? If the fields which we have tilled yield no harvests, and the beasts that we have foddered die in the stall, shall we not bow the head and say, "The Lord hath done it"? Must it not be right if the Lord ordains it? let us bless him still. If not, it will be our unbelief which hinders. How many have been happy in poverty, happier than they were in wealth! How often have the saints rejoiced more during sickness than in their health. Payson declared that during illness he felt happier than he had ever been, far happier than he had ever expected to be. Though bereavement has come into the family, and sickness unto the household, yet faith has learned to sing in all weathers because her God is still the same.

O brothers and sisters, faith is a precious preparative for anything and everything that comes; mind that you have it always ready for action. Do not leave it at home in time of storm as the foolish seaman left his anchor. It is not a grace to be shut up in a closet, or fastened to a communion table, or boxed up in a pew, but it is an everyday grace which is to be our companion in the shop and in the market, in the parlour and in the kitchen, in the workroom and in the field; ay, it may go into the workhouse with the poor, as well as into the mansion with the rich; it may either cheer the dreary hours of the infirmary, or sanctify the sunny weeks of holiday. Faith is for every place in which a good man may lawfully be found. "Should fate

command you to the utmost verge of the green earth, to rivers unknown to song," yet shall a childlike faith in God find you a home in every clime, under every sky. Oh, to feel the power of it, as to all that comes of our labour, that the life which we live in the flesh may be lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

VII. Seventhly, faith has this sweet influence upon our present life, that IT ENABLES A MAN CHEERFULLY TO LEAVE HIS OCCUPATION WHEN THE TIME COMES. A Christian may have to quit a favourite vocation on account of circumstances over which he has no control; he may have to emigrate to a distant land, or altogether to change his mode of living, and this may involve many a wrench to his feelings. It is not always easy to leave the old house, and all its surroundings, and to take a long journey; nor is it pleasant to change one's settled habits and begin life anew; yet true faith sets loose by worldly things, and is ready to haul up the anchor and make sail at the divine bidding. The believer says, "Command my journey, and I go." I am but a tent dweller, and must expect to be on the move. Like Israel in the desert, we must follow the cloud, and journey or rest as the cloud ordains, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Faith has the same gracious influence upon those who enjoy unbroken prosperity; it keeps them from taking root in the soil of earth, and this is a miracle of grace.

Sometimes our vocations have to be given up through weakness or old age. It is a hard pinch to many a busy man when he feels that he has no more strength for business, when he perceives that other and more vigorous minds must be allowed to step into the long occupied position. The workman cannot bear to feel that his hand has lost its cunning: it is a sharp experience. Faith is of essential service here. It helps a man to say, "My Master, I am one of the vessels of thy house; if thou wilt use me I will be glad; but if thou wilt put me on the shelf, I will be glad too. It must be best for me to be as thou wouldst have me." If faith resigns herself to the supreme wisdom and love and goodness of Christ, and says, "Do with me even as thou wilt: use me, or set me aside," then retirement will be a release from care and no source of distress. The evening of advanced age may be spent as joyfully as the noontide of manhood if the mind be stayed on God. "They shall bring forth fruit in old age" is a promise full often realized by believers, for all around me are venerable brethren who are more useful and more happy than ever, though the infirmities of years are growing upon them.

And then comes at last the leaving of your vocation by death, which will arrive in due time to us all. Then faith displays its utmost energy of blessing. Brethren, may we meet death as Moses did, who when God bade him climb the mountain, for there he must die, uttered no word of sorrow, but like a child obeyed his father, went upstairs to bed, looked wistfully out at the window upon the promised land, and then fell asleep. How sweet to look upon the goodly land and Lebanon, and then to be kissed to sleep by his Father's own mouth, and to be buried man knoweth not where. His work was done, and his rest was come. Beautiful are the departing words of Samuel when, laying down his office, he can challenge all men to bear witness to his character. Happy man, to depart amid universal blessing. O that each one of us may be ready to render

in his account before the judgment-seat of Christ—let the last day come when it may.

Our Master, by whose love we have been endowed with faith, has taught us how to die as well as how to live. He could say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," and he would have us say it. Thrice happy man who, in laying down the shepherd's crook or the carpenter's plane, in putting aside the ledger or the class-book never to open them again, can exclaim, "I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of life which fadeth not away." Good old Mede, the Puritan, when he was very old, and leaning on his staff, was asked how he was and he answered, "Why, going home as fast as I can; as every honest man ought to do when his day's work is done: and I bless God I have a good home to go to." Dear aged saints, so near home, does not faith transform death from an enemy into a friend, as it brings the glory so near to you? You will soon be in the Father's house and leave me behind; and yet I cannot tell: I remember that the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre, and so, perhaps, may I. You have the start of us in years, but we may be called home before you, for there are last that shall be first. Let death come when it may we shall not be afraid, for Jesus, who has loved us and given himself for us, is the resurrection and the life. Living this life in the flesh by faith upon the Son of God, we are waiting for the usher of the black rod to bring a message from the King to summon us to meet him in the upper house. Why should we be loth to go? What is there here that we should wait? What is there on this poor earth to detain a heaven-born and heaven-bound spirit? Nay, let us go, for *he* is gone in whom our treasure is, whose beauties have engrossed our love. He is not here, why should we desire to linger? He has risen, let us rise.

Thus, from the beginning to the end of the life that we live in the flesh, faith upon the Son of God answereth all things, and all its paths drop fatness.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122, 121, 116 (Part III)

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A GREATER THAN SOLOMON.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 6TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”—Luke xi. 31.

OUR first thought is that no mere man would have said this concerning himself unless he had been altogether eaten up with vanity; for Solomon was among the Jews the very ideal of greatness and wisdom. It would be an instance of the utmost self-conceit if any mere man were to say of himself—“A greater than Solomon is here.” Any person who was really greater and wiser than Solomon would be the last man to claim such pre-eminence. A wise man would never think it; a prudent man would never say it. The Lord Jesus Christ, if we regard him as a mere man, would never have uttered such an expression, for a more modest, self-forgetting man was never found in all our race. View it on the supposition that the Christ of Nazareth was a mere man, and I say that his whole conduct was totally different from the spirit which would have suggested an utterance like this—“A greater than Solomon is here.” For men to compare themselves with one another is not wise, and Christ was wise; it is not humble, and Christ was humble. He would not have thus spoken if there had not been cause and reason in his infinitely glorious nature. It was because the divinity within him must speak out. For God to say that he is greater than all his creatures is no boasting; for what are they in his sight? All worlds are but sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence. Space, time, eternity, all these are as nothing before him; and for him to compare or even to contrast himself with one of his own creatures is supreme condescension, let him word the comparison how he may. It was the divine within our Lord which made him say—and not even then with a view to exalt himself, but with a view to point the moral that he was trying to bring before the people—“A greater than Solomon is here.” He did as good as say, “The queen of the south came from a distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but you refuse to hear *me*. She gave attention to a man, but you will not regard your God. You will not listen to the incarnate Deity who tells you words of infinite, infallible wisdom.” Our Lord Jesus is aiming at his hearers' good, and where the motive is so disinterested there remains no room

for criticism. He tells them that he is greater than Solomon, to convince them of the greatness of their crime in refusing to listen to the messages of love with which his lips were loaded. Foreigners came from afar to Solomon; but I, says he, have come to your door, and brought infinite wisdom into your very gates, and yet you refuse me. Therefore the queen of the south shall rise up in judgment against you, for, in rejecting me, you reject a greater than Solomon.

The second thought that comes to one's mind is this: notice the self-consciousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He knows who he is, and what he is, and he is not lowly in spirit because he is ignorant of his own greatness. He was meek and lowly in heart—" *Servus servorum*," as the Latins were wont to call him, "Servant of servants," but all the while he knew that he was *Rex regum*, or King of kings. He takes a towel and he washes his disciples' feet; but all the while he knows that he is their Master and their Lord. He associates with publicans and harlots, and dwells with the common people; but all the while he knows that he is the only begotten of the Father. He sits as a child in the temple hearing and asking questions of the rabbis; he stands among his disciples as though he were one of themselves, conversing with the ignorant and foolish of the day, seeking their good; but he knows that he is not one of them; he knows that he has nothing to learn from them: he knows that he is able to teach senates and to instruct kings and philosophers, for he is greater than Solomon. He wears a peasant's garb, and has not where to lay his head; but he knows that, whatever the lowliness of his condition, he is greater than Solomon; he lets us perceive that he knows it, that all may understand the love which brought him down so low. It is grand humility on Christ's part that he condescends to be our servant, our Saviour, when he is so great that the greatest of men are as nothing before him. "He counted it not robbery to be equal with God": mark that; and yet "he made himself of no reputation." Some people do not know their own worth, and so, when they stoop to a lowly office it is no stoop to their minds, for they do not know their own abilities. They do not know to what they are equal; but Christ did know: he knew all about his own Deity, and his own wisdom and greatness as man. I admire, therefore, the clear understanding which sparkles in his deep humiliation, like a gem in a dark mine. He is not one who stoops down according to the old rhyme—

"As needs he must who cannot sit upright";

but he is one who comes down wittingly from his throne of glory, marking each step and fully estimating the descent which he is making. The cost of our redemption was known to him, and he endured the cross, despising the shame. Watts well sings—

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Saviour knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

Brethren, if our Saviour himself said that he was greater than Solomon, you and I must fully believe it, enthusiastically own it, and

prepare to proclaim it. If others will not own it, let us be the more prompt to confess it. If he himself had to say, before they would own it, "A greater than Solomon is here," let it not be necessary that the encomium should be repeated, but let us all confess that he is indeed greater than Solomon. Let us go home with this resolve in our minds, that we will speak greater things of Christ than we have done, that we will try to love him more and serve him better, and make him in our own estimation and in the world's greater than he has ever been. Oh for a glorious high throne to set him on, and a crown of stars to place upon his head! Oh to bring nations to his feet! I know my words cannot honour him according to his merits: I wish they could. I am quite sure to fail in my own judgment when telling out his excellence; indeed, I grow less and less satisfied with my thoughts and language concerning him. He is too glorious for my feeble language to describe him. If I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, I could not speak worthily of him. If I could borrow all the harmonies of heaven, and enlist every harp and song of the glorified, yet were not the music sweet enough for his praises. Our glorious Redeemer is ever blessed: let us bless him. He is to be extolled above the highest heavens: let us sound forth his praises. Oh for a well-tuned harp! May the Spirit of God help both heart and lip to extol him at this hour.

First, then, we shall try to *draw a parallel between Jesus and Solomon*; and, secondly, we will break away from all comparisons, and show where *there cannot be any parallel between Christ and Solomon at all*.

I. First, then, BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON there are some points of likeness.

When the Saviour himself gives us a comparison it is a clear proof that a likeness was originally intended by the Holy Spirit, and therefore we may say without hesitation that Solomon was meant to be a type of Christ. I am not going into detail, nor am I about to refine upon small matters; but I shall give you five points in which Solomon was conspicuously like to Christ, and in which our Lord was greater than Solomon. O for help in the great task before me.

And, first, in *wisdom*. Whenever you talked about Solomon to a Jew his eyes began to flash with exultation; his blood leaped in his veins with national pride. Solomon—that name brought to mind the proudest time of David's dynasty, the age of gold. Solomon, the magnificent, why, surely, his name crowns Jewish history with glory, and the brightest beam of that glory is his wisdom. In the east, and I think I may say in the west, it still remains a proverb, "To be as wise as Solomon." No modern philosopher or learned monarch has ever divided the fame of the son of David, whose name abides as the synonym of wisdom. Of no man since could it be said as of him, "And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart." *He intermeddled with all knowledge*, and was a master in all sciences. He was a naturalist: "and he spake of trees, from the cedar trees that are in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes." He was an engineer and architect, for he wrote: "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me

gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees." He was one who understood the science of government—a politician of the highest order. He was everything, in fact. God gave him wisdom and largeness of heart, says the Scripture, like the sand of the sea: "and Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about." Yes; but our Saviour knows infinitely more than Solomon. I want you to-night to come to him just as the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon, only for weightier reasons. You do not want to learn anything concerning architecture or navigation, agriculture or anatomy. You want to know only how you shall be built up a spiritual house, and how you shall cross those dangerous seas which lie between this land and the celestial city. Well, you may come to Jesus and he will teach you all that you need to know, for all wisdom is in Christ. Our divine Saviour knows things past and present and future: the secrets of God are with him. He knows the inmost heart of God, for no one knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son shall reveal him. To him it is given to take the book of prophetic decree and loose the seven seals thereof. Come, then, to Christ Jesus if you want to know the mind of God, for it is written that he "is made unto us wisdom." Solomon might *have* wisdom, but he could not *be* wisdom to others; Christ Jesus is that to the full. In the multifarious knowledge which he possesses—the universal knowledge which is stored up in him—there is enough for your guidance and instruction even to the end of life, however intricate and overshadowed your path may be.

Solomon proved his wisdom in part by his *remarkable inventions*. We cannot tell what Solomon did not know. At any rate, no man knows at this present moment how those huge stones, which have lately been discovered, which were the basis of the ascent by which Solomon went up to the House of the Lord, were ever put into their places. Many of the stones of Solomon's masonry are so enormous that scarcely could any modern machinery move them; and without the slightest cement they are put together so exactly that the blade of a knife could not be inserted between them. It is marvellous how the thing was done. How such great stones were brought from their original bed in the quarry—how the whole building of the temple was executed—nobody knows. The castings in brass and silver are scarcely less remarkable. No doubt many inventions have passed away from the knowledge of modern times, inventions as remarkable as those of our own age. We are a set of savages that are beginning to learn something, but Solomon knew and invented things which we shall, perhaps, rediscover in five hundred years time. By vehement exertion this boastful nineteenth century, wretched century as it is, will crawl towards the wisdom which Solomon possessed ages ago. Yet is Jesus greater than Solomon. As for inventions, Solomon is no inventor at all compared with him who said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom." O Saviour, didst thou find out the way of our salvation? Didst thou bring into the world and carry out and execute the way by which hell-gate should

be closed, and heaven-gate, once barred, should be set wide open? Then, indeed, art thou wiser than Solomon. Thou art the deviser of salvation, the architect of the church, the author and finisher of our faith.

Solomon has left us some very *valuable books*—the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the matchless Song. But, oh, the words of Solomon fall far short of the words of Jesus Christ, for they are spirit and life. The power of the word of Jesus is infinitely greater than all the deep sayings of the sage. Proverbial wisdom cannot match his sayings, nor can "The Preacher" rival his sermons, and even the divine Song itself would remain without a meaning—an allegory never to be explained—if it were not that Christ himself is the sum and substance of it. Solomon may sing of Christ, but Christ is the substance of the song. He is greater than Solomon in his teachings, for his wisdom is from above, and leads men up to heaven. Blessed are they that sit at his feet.

Again, Solomon showed his wisdom in *difficult judgments*. You know how he settled the question between the two women concerning the child; many other puzzles Solomon solved, and many other knots Solomon was able to untie. He was a great ruler and governor—a man wise in politics, in social economy, and in commerce—wise in all human respects. But a greater than Solomon is present where Christ is. There is no difficulty which Christ cannot remove, no knot which he cannot untie, no question which he cannot answer. You may bring your hard questions to him, and he will answer them; and if you have any difficulty on your heart to-night, do but resort to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and search his word, and you shall hear a voice as from the sacred oracle, which shall lead you in the path of safety.

My point at this time, especially as we are coming to the Communion table, is this. I want you that love the Lord Jesus Christ to believe in his infinite wisdom, and come to him for direction. I fear that when you are in trouble, you half suppose that the great keeper of Israel must have made a mistake. You get into such an intricate path that you say, "Surely, my Shepherd has not guided me aright." Never think so. When you are poor and needy still say, "This my poverty was ordained by a greater than Solomon." What if you seem to be deprived of every comfort, and you are brought into a strange and solitary way, where you find no city to dwell in? Yet a guide is near, and that guide is not foolish; but a greater than Solomon is here. I think I look to-night into a great furnace. It is so fierce that I cannot bear to gaze into its terrible blaze. For fear my eyeballs should utterly fail me and lose the power of sight through the glare of that tremendous flame, I turn aside, for the fury of its flame overpowers me. But when I am strengthened to look again I see ingots of silver refining in the white heat, and I note that the heat is tempered to the last degree of nicety. I watch the process to the end, and I say, as I behold those ingots brought out all clear and pure, refined from all dross, and ready for the heavenly treasury, "Behold, a greater than Solomon was in that furnace work." So you will find it, O sufferer. Infinite wisdom is in your lot. Come, poor child, do not begin to interfere with your Saviour's better judgment, but let it order all things. Do not let your little "Know" ever rise up against the great knowledge of your dear Redeemer. Think of this when you wade in deep waters,

and comfortably whisper to yourself,—“A greater than Solomon is here.”

I have not time to enlarge, and therefore I would have you notice, next, that our Lord Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon in *wealth*. This was one of the things for which Solomon was noted. He had great treasures: he “made gold to be as stones, and as for silver it was little accounted of,” so rich did he become. He had multitudes of servants. I think he had sixty thousand hewers in the mountains hewing out stones and wood, so numerous were the workmen he employed. His court was magnificent to the last degree. When you read of the victuals that were prepared to feed the court, and of the stately way in which everything was arranged from the stables of the horses upwards to the ivory throne, you feel, like the queen of Sheba, utterly astonished, and say, “The half was not told me.” But, oh, when you consider all the wealth of Solomon, what poor stuff it is compared with the riches that are treasured up in Christ Jesus. Beloved, he who died upon the cross, and was indebted to a friend for a grave; he who was stripped even to the last rag ere he died; he who possessed no wealth but that of sorrow and sympathy, yet had about him the power to make many rich, and he has made multitudes rich—rich to all the intents of everlasting bliss; and therefore he must be rich himself. Is he not rich who enriches millions? Why, our Lord Jesus Christ, even by a word, comforted those that were bowed down. When he stretched out his hand he healed the sick with a touch. There was a wealth about his every movement. He was a full man, full of all that man could desire to be full of; and now, seeing that he has died and risen again, there is in him a wealth of pardoning love, a wealth of saving power; a wealth of intercessory might before the Father’s throne, a wealth of all things by which he enriches the sons of men, and shall enrich them to all eternity.

I want this truth to come home to you: I want you to recognise the riches of Christ, you that are his people; and, in addition, to remember the truth of our hymn—

“Since Christ is rich can I be poor?
What can I want besides?”

I wish we could learn to reckon what we are by what Christ is. An old man said, “I am very old; I have lost my only son; I am penniless; and, worst of all, I am blind. But,” added he, “this does not matter, for Christ is not infirm; Christ is not aged; Christ has all riches; and Christ is not blind; and Christ is mine; and I have all things in him.” Could you not get hold of that somehow, brothers and sisters? Will not the Holy Spirit teach you the art of appropriating the Lord Jesus and all that he is and has. If Christ be your representative, why, then you are rich in him. Go to him to be enriched. Suppose I were to meet a woman, and I knew her husband to be a very wealthy man, and that he loved her very much, and she were to say to me, “I am dreadfully poor; I do not know where to get raiment and food.” “Oh,” I should say, “That woman is out of her mind.” If she has such a husband, surely she has only to go to him for all that she needs. And what if nothing is invested in her name, yet it is in his name, and they are one, and he will deny her nothing.” I should say, “My good woman,

you must not talk in that fashion, or I will tell your husband of you." Well, I think that I shall have to say the same of you who are so very poor and cast down, and yet are married to Jesus Christ. I shall have to tell your Husband of you, that you bring such complaints against him, for all things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's; wherefore, "lift up the hands that hang down, and confirm the feeble knees"; use the knees of prayer and the hand of faith, and your estate will well content you. Do not think that you are married to Rehoboam, who will beat you with scorpions, for you are joined to a greater than Solomon. Do not fancy that your heavenly Bridegroom is a beggar. All the wealth of eternity and infinity is his; how can you say that you are poor while all that he has is yours?

Now, thirdly, and very briefly indeed. There was one point about Solomon in which every Israelite rejoiced, namely, that he was *the prince of peace*. His name signifies peace. His father, David, was a great warrior, but Solomon had not to carry on war. His power was such that no one dared to venture upon a conflict with so great and potent a monarch. Every man throughout Israel sat under his vine and figtree, and no man was afraid. No trumpet of invader was heard in the land. Those were halcyon days for Israel when Solomon reigned. Ah, but in that matter a greater than Solomon is here; for Solomon could not give his subjects peace of mind, he could not bestow upon them rest of heart, he could not ease them of their burden of guilt, or draw the arrow of conviction from their breast and heal its smart. But I preach to you to-night that blessed divine Man of Sorrows who has wrought out our redemption, and who is greater than Solomon in his peace-giving power. Oh, come and trust him. Then shall your "peace be as a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea." Am I addressing one of God's people who is sorely troubled; tumbled up and down in his thoughts? Brother or sister, do not think that you must wait a week or two before you can recover your peace. You can become restful in a moment, for "He is our peace,"—even he himself, and he alone. And, oh, if you will but take him at once, laying hold upon him by the hand of faith as your Saviour, this man shall be the peace even when the Assyrian shall come into the land. There is no peace like the peace which Jesus gives; it is like a river, deep, profound, renewed, ever flowing, overflowing, increasing and widening into an ocean of bliss. "The peace of God; which passeth all understanding, shall keep your heart and mind, through Jesus Christ." Oh, come to him. Come to him at this moment. Do not remain an hour away from your Noah, or rest, for with him in the ark your weary wing shall be tired no longer. You shall be safe and restful the moment you return to him. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. I want you to get that joy and to enter into this peace. Blessed combination, joy and peace! Peace, peace, there is music in the very word: get it from him who is the Word, and whose voice can still a storm into a calm. A greater than Solomon is here to give you that peace; beat the sword of your inward warfare into the ploughshare of holy service; no longer sound an alarm, but blow up the trumpet of peace in this day of peace.

A fourth thing for which Solomon was noted was his *great works*. Solomon built the temple, which was one of the seven wonders of the

world at its time. A very marvellous building it must have been, but I will not stay to describe it, for time fails us. In addition to this he erected for himself palaces, constructed fortifications, and made aqueducts and great pools to bring streams from the mountains to the various towns. He also founded Palmyra and Baalbec—those cities of the desert—to facilitate his commerce with India, Arabia, and other remote regions. He was a marvellous man. Earth has not seen his like. And yet a greater than Solomon is here, for Christ has brought the living water from the throne of God right down to thirsty men, being himself the eternal aqueduct through which the heavenly current streams. Christ has built fortresses and munitions of defence, behind which his children stand secure against the wrath of hell; and he has founded and is daily finishing a wondrous temple, his church, of which his people are the living stones, fashioned, polished, rendered beautiful—a temple which God himself shall inhabit, for he “dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say, of this building”; but he dwells in a temple which he himself doth pile, of which Christ is architect and builder, foundation, and chief corner-stone. But Jesus builds for eternity, an everlasting temple, and, when all visible things pass away, and the very ruins of Solomon’s temple and Solomon’s aqueduct are scarcely to be discerned, what a sight will be seen in that New Jerusalem! The twelve courses of its foundations are of precious stones, its walls bedight with diamonds rare, its streets are paved with gold, and its glory surpasses that of the sun. I am but talking figures, poor figures, too; for the glory of the city of God is spiritual, and where shall I find words with which to depict it? There, where the Lamb himself is the light, and the Lord God himself doth dwell—there the whole edifice, the entire New Jerusalem—shall be to the praise and the glory of his grace who gave Jesus Christ to be the builder of the house of his glory, of which I hope we shall form a part for ever and ever.

Now, if Christ does such great works, I want you to come to him, that he may work in you the work of God. That is the point. Come and trust him at once. Trust him to build you up. Come and trust him to bring the living water to your lips. Come and trust him to make you a temple of the living God. Come, dear child of God, if you have great works to do, come and ask for the power of Christ with which to perform them. Come, you that would leave some memorial to the honour of the divine name, come to him to teach and strengthen you. He is the wise master-builder; come and be workers together with Christ. Baptize your weakness into his infinite strength, and you shall be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. God help you so to do.

Once more. I draw the parallel upon the fifth point, and I have done with it. Solomon was great as to *dominion*. The kingdom of the Jews was never anything like the size before or after that Solomon made it. It appears to have extended from the river of Egypt right across the wilderness far up to the Persian Gulf. We can scarcely tell how far Solomon’s dominions reached; they are said to have been “from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.” By one mode or another he managed to bring various kings into

subjection to him, and he was the greatest monarch that ever swayed the sceptre of Judah. It has all gone now. Poor, feeble Rehoboam dropped from his foolish hands the reins his father held. The kingdom was rent in pieces, the tributary princes found their liberty, and the palmy days of Israel were over. On the contrary, our Lord Jesus Christ at this moment has dominion over all things. God has set him over all the works of his hands. Ay, tell it out among the heathen that the Lord reigneth. The feet that were nailed to the tree are set upon the necks of his enemies. The hands that bore the nails sway at this moment the sceptre of all worlds: Jesus is King of kings, and Lord of lords! Hallelujah! Let universal sovereignty be ascribed to the Son of man: to him who was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Tell it out, ye saints, for your own comfort. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Everything that happens in providence is under his sway still, and the time is coming when a moral and spiritual kingdom will be set up by him which shall encompass the whole world. It does not look like it, does it? All these centuries have passed away, and little progress has been made. Ah, but he cometh; and when he cometh, or ere he cometh, he shall overturn, overturn, overturn, for his right it is, and God will give it him. And, as surely as God lives, unto him shall every man bow the knee, "and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Do not be afraid about it. Do not measure difficulties, much less tremble at them. What is faith made for but to believe that which seems impossible? To expect universal dominion for Christ when everything goes well is but the expectation of reason; but to expect it when everything goes ill, is the triumph of Abrahamic confidence. Look upon the great mountain and say, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before the true Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." In the blackest midnight, when the ebon darkness stands thick and hard as granite before you, believe that, at the mystic touch of Christ, the whole of it shall pass away, and at the brightness of his rising the eternal light shall dawn, never to be quenched. This is to act the part of a believer; and I ask you to act that part, and believe to the full in Christ the Omnipotent. What means this stinted faith in an almighty arm? What a fidget we are in and what a worry seizes us if a little delay arises! Everything has to be done in the next ten minutes, or we count our Lord to be slack. Is this the part of wisdom? The Eternal has infinite leisure, who are we that we should hasten him?

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour."

A day is long to us: but a thousand years to him are but as the twinkling of a star. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, for the time shall come when the God of Israel shall put to rout his adversaries, and the Christ of the cross shall be the Christ of the crown. We shall one day hear it said,—The great Shepherd reigns; and his unsuffering kingdom now hath come. Then rocks and hills, and vales and islands of the sea shall all be vocal with the one song,

"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and glory and power and dominion and might for ever and ever!"

Thus I have tried to draw the parallel, but I pray you to see the Lord Jesus for yourself, and know whether I have spoken the truth about him. You have heard the report; now, like the Queen of Sheba, go and see for yourself. Get to Christ, as to his dominion, come under his sway and own his sceptre. Go and trust your King; love your King; praise your King; delight in your King. How courtiers delight to be summoned to court! How glad they are to see the queen's face. How pleased they are if she gives them but a kindly word! Surely, their fortune is made, or at least their hopes are raised and their spirits lifted up. Shall we not sun ourselves in the presence of the blessed and only Potentate? Let us come into the presence of our King to-night, or else let us sit here and weep. Let us come to his table to feed upon himself. Let us live on his word. Let us delight in his love; and we shall surely say, "A greater than Solomon is here."

II. I shall not detain you longer than a minute or two while I remark that we must rise beyond all parallels, if we would reach the height of this great argument, for BETWEEN CHRIST AND SOLOMON THERE IS MUCH MORE CONTRAST THAN COMPARISON—much more difference than likeness.

In his *nature* the Lord Jesus is greater than Solomon. Alas, poor Solomon! The strongest man that ever lived, namely, Samson, was the weakest of men; and the wisest man that ever lived was, perhaps, the greatest, certainly the most conspicuous, fool. How different is our Lord! There is no infirmity in Christ, no folly in the incarnate God. The backsliding of Solomon finds no parallel in Jesus, in whom the prince of this world found nothing though he searched him through and through.

Our Lord is greater than Solomon because he is not mere man. He is man, perfect man, man to the utmost of manhood, sin excepted; but still he is more, and infinitely more, than man. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is God himself. "The Word was God." God dwells in him, and he himself is God.

As in *nature* he was infinitely superior to Solomon, and not to be compared with him for a moment, so was he in *character*. Look at Christ and Solomon for a minute as to real greatness of character, and you can hardly see Solomon with a microscope, while Christ rises grandly before you, growing every moment till he fills the whole horizon of your admiration. Principally let me note the point of self-sacrifice. Jesus lived entirely for other people; he had never a thought about himself. Solomon was, to a great extent, wise unto himself, rich unto himself, strong unto himself; and you see in those great palaces, and in all their arrangements, that he seeks his own pleasure, honour, and emolument; and, alas! that seeking of pleasure leads him into sin, that sin into a still greater one. Solomon, wonderful as he is, only compels you to admire him for his greatness, but you do not admire him for his goodness. You see nothing that makes you love him, you rather tremble before him than feel gladdened by him. Oh, but look at Christ. He does not have a thought for himself. He lives for others. How grandly magnificent he is in disinterested love. He

"loved his church and gave himself for it." He pours out even his heart's blood for the good of men: and hence, dear friends, at this moment our blessed Lord is infinitely superior to Solomon in his influence. Solomon has little or no influence to-day. Even in his own time he never commanded the influence that Christ had in his deepest humiliation. I do not hear of any that were willing to die for Solomon; certainly nobody would do so now. But how perpetually is enthusiasm kindled in ten thousand breasts for Christ! They say that if again there were stakes in Smithfield we should not find men to burn at them for Christ. I tell you, it is not so. The Lord Jesus Christ has at this moment a remnant according to the election of his grace who would fling themselves into a pit of fire for him, and joy to do it. "Who shall separate us"—even us poor pigmies—"from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "Oh," says one, "I do not think I could suffer martyrdom." You are not yet called to do so, my brother, and God has not given you the strength to do it before the need arises; but you will have strength enough if ever it comes to your lot to die for Jesus. Did you never hear of the martyr who, the night before he was to be burnt, sat opposite the fire, and, taking his shoe off, he held his foot close to the flame till he began to feel the burning of it? He drew it back and said, "I see God does not give me power to bear such suffering as I put upon myself, but I make none the less doubt," said he, "that I shall very well stand the stake to-morrow morning, and burn quick to the death for Christ without starting back." And so he did, for he was noticed never to stir at all while the flames were consuming him. There is a great deal of difference between your strength to-day and what your strength would be if you were called to some tremendous work or suffering. My Lord and Master, let me tell you, wakes more enthusiasm in human breasts at this moment than any other name in the universe. Napoleon once said, "I founded a kingdom upon force, and it will pass away;" but "Christ founded a kingdom upon love, and it will last for ever and ever." And so it will. Blot out the name of Christ from the hearts of his people? Strike you sun from the firmament, and quench the stars; and when you have achieved that easy task, yet have you not begun to remove the glory of the indwelling Christ from the hearts of his people. Some of us delight to think that we bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. "Where?" says one. I answer, it is all over us. We have been buried into his name, and we belong to him, in spirit, soul, and body. That water-mark, which denotes that we are his, can never be taken out of us. We are dead with him, wherein also we were buried with him and are risen again with him; and there is nothing at this moment that stirs our soul like the name of Jesus. Speak for yourselves. Is it not so? Have you never heard of one who lay dying, his mind wandering, and his wife said to him, "My dear, do you not know me?" He shook his head; and they brought near his favourite child. "Do you not know me?" He shook his head. One whispered, "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ?" and he said, "He is all my salvation and all my desire." Oh, blessed name! Blessed name! Some years ago I was away from this place for a little rest, and I was thinking to myself, "Now, I wonder whether I really respond to the power of the gospel as I should like to do? I will go and hear

a sermon and see." I would like to sit down with you in the pews sometimes and hear somebody else preach,—not everybody, mark you, for when I hear a good many I want to be doing it myself. I get tired of them if they do not glow and burn. But that morning I thought I would drop into a place of worship such as there might be in the little town. A poor, plain man, a countryman, began preaching about Jesus Christ. He praised my Master in very humble language, but he praised him most sincerely. Oh, but the tears began to flow. I soon laid the dust all round me where I sat, and I thought, "Bless the Lord! I do love him." It only wants somebody else to play the harp instead of me, and my soul is ready to dance to the heavenly tune. Only let the music be Christ's sweet, dear, precious name, and my heart leaps at the sound. Oh, my brethren, sound out the praises of Jesus Christ! Sound out that precious name! There is none like it under heaven to stir my heart. I hope you can all say the same. I know you can if you love him; for all renewed hearts are enamoured of the sweet Lord Jesus. "A greater than Solomon is here." Solomon has no power over your hearts, but Jesus has. His influence is infinitely greater; *his power to bless* is infinitely greater; and so let us magnify and adore him with all our hearts.

Oh, that all loved him! Alas that so many do not! What strange monsters! Why, if you do not love Christ, what are you at? You hearts of stone, will you not break? If his dying love do not break them, what will? If you cannot see the beauties of Jesus, what can you see? You blind bats! O you that know not the music of his name, you are deaf. O you that do not rejoice in him, you are dead. What are you at, that you are spared through the pleadings of his love, and yet do not love him? God have mercy upon you, and bring you to delight yourselves in Christ, and trust him! As for us who do trust him, we mean to love him and delight in him more and more, world without end. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Colossians i.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—390, 389, 416.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 29TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”—Romans xiv. 10–12.

No doubt there is an error in our version, for where in the tenth verse we read, “The judgment seat of Christ,” it should be “The judgment seat of God.” I suppose the word “Christ” slipped into certain manuscripts because Paul had been speaking of Christ, and it was thought to be natural that he should continue to use the same name. Paul did not say “Christ,” but “God,” but by that word he meant the same person. Paul knew that Christ is God, and when he was speaking of Christ it was no deviation from the subject for him to speak concerning him under the title of “God.” It was necessary here for him to use the word “God,” because he was about to quote from the Old Testament Scripture a passage which speaks concerning the sovereignty of God, which is to be acknowledged and confessed by all mankind. The passage runs, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” I beg you to notice how strongly this passage goes to prove the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ; because the whole run of the passage is concerning Christ. “To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” And then the apostle immediately, without any break in the sense whatever, speaks of God, because he was speaking of the same person, and he quotes a passage which relates to God himself, and uses it as relating to Christ. It does, indeed, relate to our Lord Jesus Christ, for he is “very God of very God,” and God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. In another place Paul most distinctly declares that it is Christ who is to judge the world. Look into the fifth chapter of the second epistle to the Corinthians, at the ninth verse, “We labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him; for we must all appear before the judgment seat of

Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Therefore, though the reading should be God, the sense is "Christ."

It would have been a most important point with Paul to draw a distinction between Christ and God if there had been any doubt as to his divinity. It would have been a most necessary thing to prevent us from idolizing a mere man. But here, so far from taking any pains to make such distinction between Christ Jesus and God, as would have been needful if he were not God, he interchanges the two words. He speaks of them in the same breath, for they are one. "The Lord shall judge his people," and it is "the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom" (2 Tim. iv. 1). "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him" (Rev. i. 7). This judgment by Christ is by our apostle proved from an Old Testament prophecy which certainly refers to Jehovah himself. Read Isaiah xlv. 23, and learn from it that our Lord Jesus is Jehovah, and let us joyfully adore him as our Saviour and God, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

The doctrine of eternal judgment, upon which I shall speak this morning, is introduced to us for a certain reason. Paul saw among Christians a much too common habit of judging one another. I suppose if Paul were to come among us now he would not see any remarkable difference upon that point. Just then the bulk of the converts were Jews, and as such, they brought into the Christian Church their former religious habits; those men who had devoutly kept the ceremonial law felt as if they would violate their consciences if they did not continue to keep its more prominent precepts; and though they gave up certain of its observances which were evidently abolished by the gospel, they kept up others, such as special days for religious fasts and feasts. Many true but weak believers were very scrupulous about what they should eat, thinking to keep up the legal distinction between meats clean and unclean. At the same time the church had in her midst men who said, and said correctly, "The coming of Christ has done away with the old dispensation; these holy days are all types and shadows whose substance is in Christ. Has not the Lord shown to Peter, who is the minister of the circumcision, that henceforth nothing is common or unclean?" The men of strong faith blamed their weaker brethren for being superstitious, and by their superstition bringing a yoke of bondage upon themselves. "No," replied the weaker sort, "we were not superstitious; we are conscientious, while you go much too far in your liberty, and cause us to stumble." Thus while the strong looked down upon the weak, almost doubting whether they could have come into the liberty of Christ at all, the weak condemned the strong, almost charging them with turning their liberty into licence. They were both wrong, for they were judging one another. Paul, who was himself most strongly opposed to the Judaizing party, and in every respect came out clear and straight upon the bold lines of Christian liberty, was, nevertheless, so actuated by the spirit of his Master that he was ready to be all things to all men, and seeing grave peril of dissension where all should be love, he rushed into the breach, and he said, "Do not judge one another: what have ye to do with judging? There is a judgment yet to come."

He mentioned the future judgment on purpose that by its powerful influence upon their minds they might be taken away from the frivolous amusement, for it does not come to much more—the frivolous amusement, the mischievous meddlesomeness of judging one another, when already the judge is at the door.

Let us linger a minute over this practical point, and see how Paul rebukes the spirit of judging one another. First, he says in effect that it is *unnatural*. "Why dost thou judge thy brother? Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? He whom thou judgest or despisest is thy brother. Thou hast called the weak one superstitious, but he is thy brother: thou hast called the strong man licentious because he enjoys his liberty; but he is thy brother." If we must needs judge, certainly it should not be those who are linked to us by the ties of spiritual relationship. Are not all believers one family in Christ? Wherever the root of the matter is to be found there exists an overwhelming argument for undying unity. Why, then, wilt thou take thy brother by the throat and drag him before thy judgment seat, and make him answer to thee, brother to brother, and then condemn him? Shall a brother condemn a brother? When the outside world censures Christians we understand it, for they hated our Master, and they will hate us; but inside the charmed circle of Christian communion there should be esteem for one another, a defending of each other: we should be anxious rather to apologise for infirmity than to discover imperfection. Far be it from us to find flaws where they do not exist. Would to God it were so, that perfect love cast out all suspicion of one another, and that we had confidence in each other, because Christ our Lord will hold up our brethren, even as he has upheld ourselves.

This judging among Christians, then, is, first of all, unnatural; and, next, it is *an anticipation of the judgment day*. There is to come a day when men shall be judged—judged after a better fashion than you and I can judge. How dare we, then, travesty God's great assize by ourselves mounting the throne and pretending to rehearse the solemn transactions of that tremendous hour? Judgment will come soon enough: may the Lord have mercy upon us in that day. My brother, why needest thou hurry it on by thyself ascending the throne? Cannot God do his own work? "Vengeance is mine: I will repay," saith the Lord. We need not spend our time in perpetually trying to discern between the tares and the wheat. The tares to which the Saviour referred in that parable were so like the wheat that men could not tell which was which, and his command was, "Let both grow together until the harvest." At harvest time he will give the reapers directions for separating between the real wheat and that which was a mockery of it. As for us, the saints shall judge the world, but for the present the order is "judge nothing before the time." We can separate between the outwardly vile and the outwardly pure, by marks which God has given us, such as these, "By their fruits ye shall know them," and "If any man love not the Lord Jesus let him be anathema." As guardians of the church's honour we are bound to use these rules; but between brother and brother, differing on minor points, between Christian and Christian, each one obeying his conscience, we are not to exercise mutual condemnation. Come hither, brethren! Here is work enough for you all in dragging the great net

to shore. What are you at there? Sitting down and trying to put the good into vessels, and cast the bad away? That work may be left till later on; but now let us drag the net to shore. Haul away, brethren, with all your might! By-and-by shall come the time for reckoning up the results of our fishery, and separating between the seeming and the true.

Moreover, we not only anticipate the judgment, but we *impudently intrude ourselves into the office and prerogative of Christ* when we condemn the saints. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ:" that is the true throne of judgment. How many times I have had to appear before the judgment seat of my fellow-men! Sometimes one's motives are impugned; another time one's actions, or mode of speech, or way of managing church affairs. Well, it is a small matter for us to appear before men's judgment seat: we may very well refuse to put in an appearance at all, for man is not our master, and we are not bound to answer to his summons. Why is it that so many brethren seem to think that they are masters, and have a right to judge the Lord's servants? I know some Christians who not only form judgments, and very severe judgments, upon all that are round about them as to the facts that come under their notice; but they, also, without any facts whatever, conceive notions concerning persons whom they have never seen, and are full of obstinate prejudices against them. Many twist words into meanings which they were never intended to mean by the person who used them; and others, even without so much as the excuse of misunderstanding words, sit down and imagine evil against their brethren. They dream that they are slighted, and then hard judgments follow. Once imagine that you are badly treated, and then you will think that everything is done out of spite to you, and the next thing is to think spitefully of others. There are persons about who are liberally gifted in the line of gossip who by their talk would make you think that you were living in Sodom and Gomorrah, if not in Tophet. You are made to fear that everyone you have trusted is a vile deceiver, that every man who is zealous is mercenary, that every minister is preaching in public what he secretly disbelieves, that every generous subscriber only gives out of pride; that, in fact, you are living in a place where the race of Judas Iscariot is to be seen, reproduced ten thousand times over. One goes to bed and cannot sleep after talking to these tale-bearers. The consolation is that there is no truth in their wonderful discoveries. These slanderous statements are a base burlesque of judgment, and nothing more. Why are they thought so much of? After you and I have done our best to hold our mimic court and have summoned this man and that man before us, what is it at its best but child's play, and at its worst a violent usurpation of the rights of Christ Jesus, who alone reigns as lawgiver in the midst of his church to-day, and who will sit as judge on the clouds of heaven by-and-by to judge the world in righteousness?

The apostle argues strongly against this evil spirit of censoriousness in the Christian Church; and to give a knock-down blow to it he says, "It is all *needless*; you need not judge one another, for both your brother and yourself will stand before the judgment seat of God. There is no need of your condemnation, for if any man be worthless the Judge will condemn him: you may not interfere with the business of the great Supreme; he will manage the affairs of men far better than you can."

Yet more, your judgment is *unprofitable* : you would spend your time much more profitably if you would recollect that you also who can be so exact and severe in pointing out this fault here, and the other fault there, will be yourselves examined by an unerring eye. Your own account books have to be sent in, and to be examined item by item ; therefore look well to your own matters. If you were watching your own heart, out of which are the issues of life ; if you were watching your own tongue and bridling it, and so mastering your whole body ; if you were watching your own opportunities for usefulness ; if you were observing your Master's eye as a handmaiden looks to her mistress, you would be doing something that would pay you far better than censuring others, something much more to the glory of God, much more to the gain of the church, much more to the comfort of your own soul. So the apostle winds up by saying, according to the most forcible rendering of the original, " We must each one of us give an account of himself to God."

Brothers, sisters, I bring these truths before you because they are meant for brothers in Christ, and not so much for the outside world. It is to those who have faith, and are in the family of love, that the word of warning is given that we do not judge, and to us the argument is addressed that we shall each one give an account for himself to God. I do not know that you specially need a warning against unkind judgments, but I know that you may need it, even as other churches have done. I am very thankful that we have not been much disturbed with this great evil ; but, still, it does come up among all Christian people more or less. I read the other day in an interesting pamphlet upon the Apocalypse,* a note which furnishes me with an illustration : the writer endeavours to explain why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the Book of Revelation as having its chosen twelve thousand. All the other tribes are there, but Dan is missed, and Manasseh is put in his place. The author says it is because Dan signifies " judgment," or " one that judges." He says : " These ' judges of evil thoughts ' have been sad troublers in Israel in all ages ; not fearing to judge their brother and set at nought their brother, they have judged everything and everybody but themselves. All who have not pronounced their Shibboleth, nor seen eye to eye with them, have been adjudged as heretics, not to be tolerated, but tabooed to the extent of their ability. In vain for them has it been written, ' Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts.' Like their great ancestor of this tribe, they deal in foxes and firebrands, and too often set on fire their neighbours' standing corn, an act we have never been able to commend even in Samson. This predilection for foxes and firebrands has unhappily developed in the seed of Dan to this day. And so in the place of Dan, *The Judge*, we get Manasses, *One who forgets*, one who, though cast off by his brethren, forgets and forgives their injuries, and we account it a *good exchange*; and in the New Jerusalem home, where failure will be no more, Dan, ' a serpent in the way,' or ' a lion's whelp,' would be as much out of *work* as out of *place*."

* Fulfilment of the Apocalypse. By the author of " Things which must shortly come to pass." Elliot Stock.

If any of the Danites hear or read this let them pray for grace to change their habits and natures.

I. Now I come to the doctrine itself, the solemn doctrine of judgment to come. May God make it impressive to our hearts. Our thoughts are now directed to the future judgment, and we notice concerning it, first, that **THE JUDGMENT WILL BE UNIVERSAL**: "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." There will come a judgment, then, for all classes of persons; for the strong brother who with his knowledge of Christian liberty went as far as he should, perhaps further than he ought to have gone. He judged himself to be right in the matter, but he must stand before the judgment seat of Christ about it. There will also be a judgment for the weak brother. He who was so scrupulous and precise ought not to be censuring the other man who felt free in his conscience, for he will himself stand before the judgment seat of God. No elevation in piety will exclude us from that last solemn test, and no weakness will serve as an excuse. The man of one and the man of ten talents must alike be reckoned with. Weak Christians are exempted from many trials by the gentleness of God, but not from the ultimate trial, for we shall each one of us give an account of himself unto God: the strong and the weak. The men who bore office in the church will have to answer for it, even as saith the apostle Paul, in Hebrews xiii. 17, "They watch for your souls, as they that must give an account." And again, "It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful: he that judgeth me is the Lord." I could on bended knees ask your pity for myself, having to minister to so large a congregation, and with so much larger a congregation outside to whom I weekly minister through the press. Ah me, who is sufficient for these things? Who shall be found faithful in such a position? I think all ministers might with tears in their eyes cry to you, "Brethren, pray for us." It will be the height of my ambition to be clear of the blood of all men. If, like George Fox, I can say in dying, "I am clear, I am clear," that were almost all the heaven I could wish for. Oh to discharge one's ministry aright, and to be able to render an account like that of Paul, who said, "I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith." This is my soul's longing.

Yes, but not only will ministers, and deacons, and elders, and persons who had high standing in the church have to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but so will the most obscure of the members of the church, and those secret ones who never dared to take up membership at all. You will not be able to hide away for ever. The man with the one talent must be summoned before his Lord as certainly as the man with ten, and of each one a reckoning shall be taken. In our Lord's parables it is ever the King's own servants that are called before him. "The lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them." Our Master will say to each one of his servants, "Give an account of thy stewardship." "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked," "for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God." I have not time or space to enter into the differences of that judgment as it regards the righteous and the wicked, but I confine myself to the one fact that all mankind will be judged, according to the word of the Lord in the second

chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, at the fifth verse: "The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God."

What a motley throng will gather at that assize, of all nations and peoples and tongues! Persons of all ages, too. You boys and girls, and you who have lived through a long life. Kings and princes will be there to give in their weighty account, and senators and judges to answer to their Judge; and then the multitude of the poor and needy, and those that live neglecting God, and forgetful of their souls,—they must all be there. It is a universal judgment. John says, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Both sheep and goats shall gather before the great dividing shepherd: the wise and foolish virgins shall both hear the midnight cry; the house on the rock and the house on the sand shall alike be tested by the last tremendous storm; tares and wheat alike shall ripen; bad fish and good shall be sorted out from the net, while the multitudes outside, the nations that knew not God, shall all without exception hear with trembling the summons to the dread tribunal.

Saints and sinners too, only on what a different footing, are all to be judged out of the books, and out of the Book of Life. Thus saith the word of the Lord,—“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” To the saints the judgment of the things done shall be according to righteousness, for these things shall be taken in evidence that they were indeed reconciled to God. The Judge will say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundations of the world.” And then shall come the evidence: “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; thirsty, and ye gave me drink,” and so on. These fruits shall be the evidence that they were in Christ, the evidence of their being justified by faith; while on the other hand the sour and bitter fruit of the ungodly shall be an evidence that they were not planted of the Lord: “I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; sick and in prison, and ye did not minister unto me.” We need have no fear of the judgment to come when we know that we are in Christ, for who fears to enter a just court when he knows that by the highest authority he has already been cleared? How complete the Christian’s safety! For there will be no accuser. So bright will be the righteousness of a saint through faith that no accuser will appear. Hark, the herald gives forth the challenge! “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” All through the court it rings; and God is there—the faithful and all-seeing God. Does he lay anything to their charge? Far from it. “It is God that justifieth.” Outside the court the voice demands, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of

God's elect?" They hear it in heaven, and angels who have watched the race of every believer, and seen how he has been running towards the goal, are silent as to any accusation. The challenge is heard in hell, where devils hate the godly, but they dare not forge a lie against them. Happy he who can also say, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the righteous Judge shall give me at that day." Mark, he will give it as Judge, and on that day; how say some among you that there is no judgment for the saints? Who, then, need fear to enter the court when every accusation is silenced and a reward is expected?

But still you say that the believer has sinned. Yes, but that sin has been forgiven, and he has a righteousness with which to answer the law. I will show you ere I have done how the Christian has been judged, condemned, and tried, and in reference to him the essence of the judgment is past already, so that there can be no condemnation. Hence that second challenge, "Who is he that condemneth?" The Judge is the only one who can condemn, and we are sure that he will not, for "it is Christ that died, yea rather, that has risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." Tremble not, therefore, at the doctrine that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but pray that, as John puts it, "we may have boldness in the day of judgment," because as Jude saith, the Lord Jesus "is able to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with great joy."

Not a single person shall escape the judgment. There shall be no omission from the calendar; every being of the race of Adam shall answer for himself. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the chief captains and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man" must see the face of him that sitteth upon the throne. We shall have to put in an appearance as men do in court when they are subpoenaed to attend. The word of Jesus is, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Ah, how unwillingly will rebels come before that throne! Pharaoh! you must see a greater than Moses. Herod! you must see the young child upon his throne. Judas! you hanged yourself to escape the judgment of your conscience, but by no means can you escape the judgment of your God. Though four thousand years have elapsed since men died, and their bodies may have melted quite away, yet when the trumpet ringeth out clear and shrill their bodies shall live again, and they must all come forth, each one to answer for himself at that grand assize before the Judge of all the earth, who must do right with each of them. Let us, then, bow before the solemn truth that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

The second truth, which we must make as prominent as ever we can, is that **IT WILL BE A PERSONAL JUDGMENT** for each one. This is the pith of what the apostle is saying: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." The judgment will not proceed in a rough, indiscriminate manner, as upon a race or tribe, but each man will have to stand apart, and the account reckoned will not be of a family or a band, but of each individually for himself. Note this carefully, O men: We shall have to give an account each man for his own actions, for his own

thought, for his own words, for his own intention; nay, not only of that, but of *himself*. We shall each man have to give account of the state of his own heart, of the condition of his mind before God, whether he repented, whether he believed, whether he loved God, whether he was zealous, whether he was truthful, whether he was faithful. If it only dealt with actions, words, and thoughts, the account would be solemn enough, but we must each one give an account of *himself*, of what he *was* as well as what he *did*, of what was in his heart as well as of that which came out of it in his deeds. Oh, what a trial will this be!

We shall then have to give an account of our judgments of others. We shall not have to answer for what they did, but for our daring to judge and condemn them. Did you ever think of this, you that judge others, that you are laying down the standard by which you will have to be judged yourselves? I generally find that those who are most severe towards others need and often expect great leniency towards themselves, but it will not be so at the last, for thus it is written, "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged." How easy it will be to judge the fault-finding at the judgment day. The Judge will only have to say, "They have already condemned themselves: they have condemned their own faults as they saw them in others; they have used the sharpest judgments against less faults than their own; out of their own mouth let them take the sentence and depart." You will have to render no account for other people, but you will have to render an account of yourself and how you judged other people. The last account will be wholly personal, therefore see ye to it.

That account will, according to my text, have connected with it full *submission*. "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me." You may to-day say, "I do not care about God": you will have to care about him. As truly as God lives you will have to bow. You may say, "What matters it to me what Scripture says?" It will matter to you, as certainly as God lives, which is putting it on the most solemn certainty that can be. God has taken an oath about it, and declares that you shall own his sway. You had better bend at once, for you must either break or bow. God means to have his sovereignty acknowledged by all mankind. Hath he not made us? Do we not owe everything to him? He will not have his crown rights denied for ever. He is Lord of all, and he swears by himself that every knee shall bow and own it. You will have to come to it, my friend. Next, you will have to *confess*; so the text saith. By this I understand that you will have to acknowledge that God is your Lord and Master, and had a right to your services; that you ought to have kept his law; that in sinning you have done unrighteously and acted as you ought not to have acted. That confession you will not be able to withhold. Oh how the wicked will bite their tongues when they have to acknowledge their folly and wrong-doing; but it will have to come out of every man's mouth. When God pronounces sentence, and the ungodly are sent down to hell, they will give their own assent to his righteousness in condemning and punishing them. The verdict of the castaways in hell is that they deserve it; and this is, indeed, the hell of hell, that they cannot deny the justice of those pains which come upon

them as the result of their disobedience. God will see to it that we shall justify him either in life or in death, by confessing that he is righteous.

I appeal to you, my dear hearers, whether you are ready with your account which you will have to render to God: have you kept one at all? Sometimes when men appear before a court they plead that they have no books, and it is always a bad sign. You know what the judge thinks of him. Can you dare to examine yourself, and answer questions? Can you give an account of your stewardship? Have you kept it correctly, or have you credited yourself with large things where you ought to have debited yourself? Your fraud will be discovered, for the great Accountant will read it through, and will detect an error in a single moment. Is your account kept correctly, and are you ready to render it in at this moment? Christian brother, you and I might hold back a little before we could say "Ay" to that, and yet I trust we could say it, for we know ourselves to be accepted with God. As for those who have scarcely thought of their God, their Maker, what will they do? what can they do, when each one of them must give an account before God, and they have no account except that which will condemn them for having wasted their Master's goods, for having defrauded the eternal God of that which was justly his due, and having spent upon their lusts that which ought to have been dedicated to their God? This judgment, then, will be personal. You cannot put your godly mother into the scale with yourself; you cannot associate your dear old father with yourself in judgment. O children, you cannot be judged by your ancestry, but by your acts; for it is written: "the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Oh, see ye to it: God help you to do so.

III. Thirdly, THIS JUDGMENT WILL BE DIVINE. "We shall stand before the judgment seat of God." The judgment will be universal, personal, divine; and because it is the judgment seat of God, it will be a judgment *according to truth*. God will make no mistakes: he will not impute any wrong to us undeservedly, and he will not give us credit for right because we bore the appearance of it. He will search to the very core and essence of the matter. Are you ready to be tried as by fire? Trial by fire is but a scant figure of trial by the searching eye of the Most High God. He will test us *by the supreme standard* of perfect justice. We judge by one another, and if we are as liberal, or as prayerful, or as gracious as others we consider that it is all right. But the balances of the sanctuary are far more exact. It will not be you in one scale and I in another; and if I am as gracious as you, we shall both be accepted. Ah, no; there is another standard than that, the standard of truth and grace in the heart, and real love to God, and conformity to the image of Christ. Judge ye whether ye can stand that test. That judgment will be most *searching*. "The Lord pondereth the hearts." He will not judge after the sight of the eyes, but search out our secrets. Then shall the foundations be tested, then shall all that the man rested on and stayed himself upon be tried, whether it be the Rock of Ages or whether it be the mere sand of presumption. There will be no such trial day before or after as that day of the assize of God. "For

God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

That judgment will be *impartial*. You and I are always partial in weighing ourselves. We generally give the most lenient verdict except when we happen to be despondent in spirit, and then we are morbidly sensitive. But God will judge us without partiality. Rich friend, that diamond ring will answer no purpose in that day: my ladies, those fine garments will make no impression in that court. My learned friend, that handle to your name will be of no avail; and you, fine sir, with your knighthood, earldom, or dukedom, will be none the better off; for coronets, and even imperial crowns all go for nothing before the throne of God, who is no respecter of persons.

This judgment will be *final*. The sentence of the Supreme Court will settle all. Doth he say, "Depart ye cursed"? They can do no other. Doth he say, "Come ye blessed"? Oh, how blessed to enter into the eternal home. May none of you ever hear him say, "Depart"; for he will never reverse the sentence: you will have to depart, and keep on departing, going farther, further, and further away from him who is hope and life and joy. There is no hope held out that he shall ever say, "Come back again, ye cursed"; but no, "Depart into everlasting fire in hell." God save us from such an ultimatum as that.

At the last judgment certain sins will prove to be of heavy weight. I will do no more than mention a few of them. There is one that is never treated leniently by any judge; it is contempt of court. God will speedily condemn those who have despised his authority. Are there any such here who have despised the Lord their God, and set at nought his counsel? They seldom or never think of God or his law, or even regard his day; but they say, "Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice?" Beware, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for the Lord our God is jealous of his great name, and he hears the voices of them that scoff at him.

Rejection of mercy is also a high crime and misdemeanor. The Judge who shall sit upon the throne has already presented mercy to all of you, and the unconverted among you have refused it. Surely they deserve the deepest hell who slight eternal love. If the Judge can say, "The prisoner at the bar has had the glad tidings of forgiveness presented to him, but has refused to listen to the gracious message, or having listened, and being almost persuaded, he nevertheless put it off to a more convenient time, and here he stands a trampler on the blood of Christ." This will be the fiercest heat of the eternal burnings. Ye refused mercy; ye put from you eternal life, and counted yourselves unworthy of salvation. This sin will be a millstone about the soul for ever.

Then there is the crime of wilful, deliberate sinning, with intent so to do. Have any of you been guilty of this fact, and have you not fled to Christ? Did you choose sin, knowing it to be sin? Are you still choosing sin, and living in it against the voice of conscience? Ah, believe me, sin repeated, sin continued in will bring swift and sure destruction. These sins go beforehand to judgment, and there lodge solemn complaints against the guilty.

I cannot close amid these clouds. Break forth, O sun! Turn to the

passage from which Paul quoted ; for there you shall hear a sweet gospel word which may fitly end my discourse. Paul's mind was at Isaiah xiv. 25. He did not quote the words literally, but he gave the sense. Here is the passage : " I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Now, what words do you think come before these ? You shall look for yourselves. I will wait while you open your Bibles. Do you see the blessed lines ? God declares that every man shall bow before him, and confess his authority ; but what word of exhortation stands before that oath of his ? I wish I could make it flash out at this moment in letters of light right round the building,—“ Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else.” That mercy-message stands side by side with the judgment prophecy. Come, then, dear hearts, you that are guilty, come and bow before your God ere he ascends the throne of judgment. Come and do willingly what you will have to do by-and-by unwillingly. Come now, and confess that he is judge and ought to be honoured ; confess that he is king and ought to be obeyed ; confess that you are his subject and are bound to serve him ; confess that you have done wrong, grievous wrong, in having broken his law ; come and make out your own indictment ; come and be your own accuser ; come and condemn yourself ; come and bow your head when God's law condemns you ; come and own that you deserve divine wrath, and submit yourself to the Lord's justice. Then give another look to your God and Saviour and say, “ My Lord, I know thou art my Judge ; but thou art also my Redeemer : I accept the place of condemnation, but I see that thou didst stand there in my behalf, the just for the unjust, my substitute, bearing my sin and punishment. Blessed Lord, I accept thee as my substitute ; I yield myself up to thee ; I stand now tried, condemned, punished, dead, raised again in thee, and therefore pardoned, acquitted, justified, beloved, accepted for Jesus' sake.” Oh, is not this a blessed ending to a solemn sermon ?

“ Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay ?
While through thy blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”

God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans xiv.,
xv. 1—7.

HYMNS FROM “ OUR OWN HYMN BOOK ”—190, 363, 341.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FARM LABOURERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry."—1 Corinthians iii. 6-9.

In all ages since the Fall there has been a tendency in the human heart to forget God, and get away from him. Idolatry has been the sin of all nations, including God's favoured people, the Jews, and including certain persons who call themselves Christians, and yet make idols out of crosses and images. This vicious principle of ignoring God, and setting up something between our minds and our Creator, crops up everywhere, in every department of thought. When men study the works of God in nature they often hang up a veil to hide the great Worker. Because God acts in a certain way they call his method of action a law, and straightway they speak of these laws as if they were forces and powers in and of themselves, and thus God is banished out of his own universe, and his place is taken up in the scientific world by idols called "natural laws." Take the region of providence, and here you find persons, instead of seeing the hand of God everywhere, looking to second causes; seeking causes of prosperity, and becoming very despondent if they do not appear to exist; or viewing the agents of affliction, and becoming angry against them, instead of bowing before the God who has used them for correction. It is easy to make idols out of second causes, and to forget the God who is everywhere present, causing all things to work together for good. That this evil principle should intrude into the church is very sad, and yet it is with difficulty excluded. You may bar all your doors as fast as you please, but the idol-makers will come in with their shrines. In the instance of the church at Corinth, Paul found the brethren forgetting their God and Saviour in their high esteem for certain preachers. Instead of all saying, "We are Christ's disciples," and uniting together to promote the common cause, they made parties, and one said, "Paul who founded this church is to be had in the greatest reverence, and we are of Paul"; others replied, "But Apollos is more eloquent than the apostle, and by him we have been edified till we have gone beyond Paul,

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and therefore we are of Apollos"; while a third party declared that they were of no sect whatever, for they were "brethren," and were "of Christ." These last, I suspect, either ignored or denounced the other two parties, and would not commune with them, in order to testify against their sectarianism and to promote unity. I only surmise this from the conduct of those "brethren" who in our day take the Corinthians to be their model, and cut off everybody else, being more exclusive than any other sect in Christendom. The Apostle warns the saints in Corinth against this: he brings the Lord before their minds, and bids them remember that if Paul plants and Apollos waters, still it is God that gives the increase. Since they think so highly of men, he will have it that "neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth anything," but God that giveth the increase is everything. See to it, dear friends, that ye set the Lord always before you in this church and in all your churches. Know them that labour among you, and esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, but do not make them your dependence. Recollect that the ablest ministers, the most successful evangelists, the profoundest teachers are, after all, nothing but labourers on God's farm,—“labourers together with God.” Let your mind be set upon the Master and not upon the servants, and do not say, “We are for this man because he plants,” and “we are for the other because he waters,” and “we”—a third party,—“are for nobody at all”; but let us join in ascribing all honour and praise unto God who worketh all our works in us, since every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, to whom be glory world without end.

I shall begin at the end of my text, because I find it to be the easiest way of mapping out my discourse. We shall first remark that *the church is God's farm*: “Ye are God's husbandry.” In the margin of the revised version we read “Ye are God's tilled ground,” and that is the very expression for me. “Ye are God's tilled ground,” or farm. After we have spoken of the farm we will next say a little upon the fact that *he employs labourers* on the farm; and when we have looked at the labourers—such poor fellows as they are—we will remember that *God himself is the great worker*: “We are labourers together with God.”

I. We begin by considering that **THE CHURCH IS GOD'S FARM**. The Lord has made the church of his sovereign *choice* to be his own by *purchase*, having paid for it a price immense. “The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.” Because the Lord's portion was under mortgage, therefore the only-begotten Son laid down his life as the purchase price, and redeemed his people to be the Lord's portion for ever and ever. Henceforth it is said to all believers, “Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price.” Every acre of God's farm cost the Saviour bloody sweat, yea, the blood of his heart. He loved us, and gave himself for us: that is the price he paid. What a ransom! The death of Jesus has sometimes almost seemed too high a price to pay for such poor land as we are; but the Lord having set his eye and heart upon his people would not draw back, but completed the redemption of the purchased possession. Henceforth the church is God's *treasure*, and he hath the title deeds of it, yea, of you and of me, for we belong alone to him, and we are glad to own the fact: “I am my

Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." The church is God's farm by choice and purchase.

And now he has made it his by *enclosure*. It lay exposed aforetime as part of an open common, bare and barren, covered with thorns and thistles, and the haunt of every wild beast; for we were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others." We were part of the dreary desert till divine foreknowledge surveyed the waste, and electing love marked out its portion with a full line of grace, and thus set us apart to be the Lord's own estate for ever. In due time effectual grace came forth with power, and separated us from the rest of mankind, as fields are hedged and ditched to part them from the open heath. Hath not the Lord declared that he hath chosen his vineyard and fenced it? Has he not said, "I will be a wall of fire round about you, and a glory in the midst"?

"We are a garden wall'd around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;
A little spot, enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

The Lord has also made this farm evidently his own by *cultivation*. What more could he have done for his farm? He has totally changed the nature of the soil: from being barren he hath made it a fruitful land. He hath ploughed it, and digged it, and fattened it, and watered it, and planted it with all manner of flowers and fruits. It hath already brought forth to him many a pleasant fruit, and there are brighter times to come, when angels shall shout the harvest home, and Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

This farm is kept what it is, as well as made what it is, by God's continual *protection*. Not only did he enclose it, and work upon it by his miraculous power, to make it his own farm, but he continually maintains possession of it. "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day." If it were not for God's continual power her hedges would soon be thrown down, and wild beasts would devour her fields. Wicked hands are always trying to break down her walls and lay her waste again, so that there should be no true church in the world; but the Lord is jealous for his land, and will not allow it to be destroyed. If the church were left of God she would become a howling wilderness, but she shall not come to such an end. A church would not long remain a church if God did not preserve it unto himself. What if God should say, "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." What a wilderness it would become. What saith he? "Go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Go ye to Jerusalem, where of old was the city of his glory and the shrine of his indwelling, and what is left there to-day? Go ye to Rome, where once Paul preached the gospel with power, what is it now but the centre of idolatry? The Lord may remove the candlestick, and leave a place that was bright as day to become black as darkness itself. Hence God's farm remains a

farm because he is ever in it to prevent its returning to its former wildness. Omnipotent power is as needful to keep the fields of the church under cultivation as to reclaim them at the first.

Inasmuch as the church is God's own farm, *he expects to receive a harvest from it*. He comes to us looking for sheaves, where he has sowed so plentifully. The world is waste, and he looks for nothing from it; but we are tilled land, and therefore a harvest is due from us. Barrenness suits the moorland, but to a farm it would be a great discredit. Love looks for returns of love; grace given demands gracious fruit. Watered with the drops of the Saviour's bloody sweat, shall we not bring forth a hundredfold to his praise? Kept by the eternal Spirit of God, shall there not be produced in us fruits to his glory? The Lord's husbandry upon us has shown a great expenditure of cost, and labour, and thought; ought there not to be a proportionate return? Ought not the Lord to have a harvest of obedience, a harvest of holiness, a harvest of usefulness, a harvest of praise? Shall it not be so? I think some churches forget that an increase is expected from every field of the Lord's farm, for they never have a harvest or even look for one. The people come together and take their seats on a Sunday and listen to sermons—that is, when they do not go to sleep; the sacraments are celebrated, a little money is contributed, a few poor folk are relieved, and affairs crawl along at a snail's pace. As to affecting the whole village, or endeavouring to bring the surrounding population to Christ, I do not think it has occurred to some churches to attempt it; and when certain warmer spirits seek to bring sinners to Jesus the older and more prudent folks fetch wet blankets, and use them with very great effect, so that every sign of enthusiasm is damped down. Brethren, such things ought not to be. I conceive that if there were no Christians in England but the members of our baptized churches these would suffice for God's great designs of mercy, if they were once awakened to real labour. Alas, the loiterers are many, but the labourers are few. Look, my brethren, at the number of Nonconforming churches in this land, and at the earnest ministers remaining in the Establishment, and if these were more fully quickened into spiritual life, would there not be workmen enough on the home farm? If all churches felt that they did not exist for mere existence sake, nor mere enjoyment's sake, would they not act differently? Farmers do not plough their lands or sow their fields for amusement; they mean business, and plough and sow because they desire a harvest. If this fact could but enter into the pates of some professors, surely they would look at things in a different light. But of late it has seemed as if we thought that God's church was not expected to produce anything, but existed for her own comfort and personal benefit. Brethren, it must not be so; the great Husbandman must have some reward for his husbandry. Every field must yield its increase, and the whole estate must bring forth to his praise. We join with the bride in the Song in saying, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." But I come back to the place from which I started. This farm is, by choice, by purchase, by enclosure, by cultivation, by preservation, entirely the Lord's.

See, then, the injustice of allowing any of the labourers to call even a part of the estate his own. When a great man has a large farm of

his own, what would he think if Hodge the ploughman should say, "Look here, I plough this farm, and therefore it is mine: I shall call this field Hodge's Acres"? "No," says Hobbs, "I reaped that land last harvest, and therefore it is mine, and I shall call it Hobbs's Field." What if all the other labourers became Hodgeites and Hobbsites, and so parcelled out the farm among them, I think the landlord would soon eject the lot of them. The farm belongs to its owner, and let it be called by his name; but it is absurd to call it by the names of the bumpkins who labour upon it. Is that a disrespectful title to apply to labourers? Why, I meant it for anybody and everybody whose name is used as the head of a party in the church. I meant Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and other great men, for at their best as compared with their Master they are only farm labourers, and we ought not to call parts of the farm by their names. Remember how Paul put it, "Who then is Paul and who is Apollos?" "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" The entire church belongs to him who has chosen it in his sovereignty, bought it with his blood, fenced it by his grace, cultivated it by his wisdom, and preserved it by his power. There is still but one church on the face of the earth, and those who love the Lord should keep this truth in mind. Paul is a labourer, Apollos is a labourer, Cephas is a labourer, but the farm is not Paul's, not so much as a rood of it, nor does a single parcel of land belong to Apollos, or the smallest allotment to Cephas: "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." The fact is that in this case the labourers belong to the land, and not the land to the labourers: "For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas." We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

II. We have now to notice, as our second head, that THE GREAT HUSBANDMAN EMPLOYS LABOURERS. *By human agency God ordinarily works out his designs.* He can, if he pleases, by his Holy Spirit, get directly at the hearts of men, but that is his business, and not ours; we have to do with such words as these: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The Master's commission is not, "Sit still, and see the Spirit of God convert the nations"; but, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This is God's method in supplying the race with food. In answer to the prayer, "give us this day our daily bread," he might have bidden the clouds drop manna, morning by morning, at each man's door; but he sees that it is for our good to work, and so he uses the hands of the ploughman and the sower for our supply. God might plough and sow his chosen farm, the church, by miracle, or by angels; but it is a great instance of his condescension towards his church that he blesses her through her own sons and daughters. He employs us for our own good, for we who are labourers in his fields receive much more good for ourselves than we bestow. Labour develops our spiritual muscle and keeps us in health. "Unto me," says Paul, "who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." It is a grace, then. We find it to be a means of grace to our souls to preach the gospel. I have heard it said, and I believe there is some truth in it, that those who have to preach are

under the temptation of getting so familiar with sacred things that they cease to feel their power. If this be true it is an awful proof of our total depravity, for the more familiar we are with holy things the more we ought to be affected by them; and this I know, it has been the greatest means of grace to me to be bound by my office to study the Scriptures, and wait upon God for help in expounding them. Some of you who do not grow in grace by hearing other people might possibly get on better if you were yourselves to try and preach: at any rate, you might not be quite so fault-finding with other folks. When I hear a person say, "I cannot hear my minister," I suggest to him to buy a horn. "Oh," he says, "I do not mean that. I mean that I cannot enjoy his preaching." Then I say to him, "Preach yourself." "I cannot do that." "Then do not find fault with those who are doing their best." Instead of blaming the ploughman, just try a turn in the furrow yourself. Why grumble at the weeds? Take a hoe, and work at them like a man. Do you think the hedges untidy? Put on the leather gloves, and help us trim them.

Our great Master means that every labourer on his farm should receive some benefit from it, for he never muzzles the ox which treadeth out the corn. The labourer's daily bread comes out of the soil. Though he works not for himself, but for his Master, yet still he has his portion of food. In the Lord's granary there is seed for the sower, but there is also bread for the eater. However disinterestedly we may serve God in the husbandry of his church we are ourselves partakers of the fruit. It is a great condescension on God's part that he uses us at all, for we are poor tools at the best, and more hindrance than help.

The labourers employed by God are all *occupied upon needful work*. Notice, "I have planted, Apollos watered." Who beat the big drum, or blew his own trumpet? Nobody. On God's farm none are kept for ornamental purposes. I have read some sermons which could only have been meant for show, for there was not a grain of gospel in them. They were ploughs with the share left out, drills with no wheat in the box, clod-crushers made of butter. I do not believe that our God will ever pay wages to men who only walk about his grounds to show themselves. Fine orators who display their eloquence are more like gipsies who stray on the farm to pick up chickens than honest labourers who work to bring forth a crop for their master. Why, many of the members of our churches live as if their only business on the farm was to pluck blackberries or gather wild flowers. They are great at finding fault with other people's ploughing and mowing, but not a hand's turn will they do themselves. Come on, my good fellows. Why stand ye all the day idle? The harvest is plenteous, and the labourers are few. You who think yourselves more cultivated than ordinary people, if you are indeed Christians, must not strut about and despise those who are hard at work. If you do, I shall say, "That person has mistaken his master; he may probably be in the employ of some gentleman farmer, who cares more for show than profit; but our great Lord is practical, and on his estate his labourers attend to needful labour." When you and I preach or teach it will be well if we say to ourselves, "What will be the use of what I am going to do? I am about to teach a difficult subject: will it do any good? I have chosen an abstruse

point of theology: will it serve any purpose?" Brethren, a labourer may work very hard at a whim of his own and waste his labour, but this is folly. Some discourses do little more than show the difference between *tweedle-dum* and *tweedle-dee*, and what is the use of that? Suppose we sow the fields with sawdust, or sprinkle them with rose-water, what of that? Will God bless our moral essays, and fine compositions, and pretty passages? Brethren, we must aim at usefulness: we must as labourers together with God be occupied with something that is worth doing. "I," says one, "have planted": it is well, for planting must be done. "I," answers another, "have watered:" that also is good and necessary. See to it that ye can each bring in a solid report, but let no man be content with the mere child's play of oratory, or the getting up of entertainments and such like.

On the Lord's farm *there is a division of labour*. Even Paul did not say, "I have planted and watered." No, Paul planted. And Apollos certainly could not say, "I have planted as well as watered." No, it was enough for him to attend to the watering. No one man has all gifts. How foolish, then, are they who say, "I enjoy So-and-so's ministry because he edifies the saints in doctrine, but when he was away the other Sunday I could not profit by the preacher because he was all for the conversion of sinners." Yes, he was planting; you have been planted a good while, and do not need planting again, but you ought to be thankful that others were made partakers of the benefit. One soweth and another reapeth, and therefore instead of grumbling at the honest ploughman because he did not bring a sickle with him you ought to have prayed for him that he might have strength to plough deep and break up hard hearts. Let us do all that we can, and try to do more, for the more work we can turn our hands to the better. "You must not have too many irons in the fire," said somebody. But I say, Put all the irons into the fire, and if you have not fire enough, cry to God till you have; set your whole soul on fire, and keep all your irons hot. Yet you may find it wise to direct your strength into one line of things which you understand, so that by practice you may come to be skilful in it. Each man should find out his own work and do it with his might.

Observe that, on God's farm, *there is unity of purpose* among the labourers. Read the text. "Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one." One Master has employed them, and though he may send them out at different times, and to different parts of the farm, yet they are all one in being used for one end, to work for one harvest. In England we do not understand what is meant by watering, because the farmer could not water all his farm; but in the East a farmer waters almost every inch of ground. He would have no crop if he did not use all means for irrigating the fields. If you have ever been in Italy, Egypt, or Palestine, you will have seen a complete system of wells, pumps, wheels, buckets, channels, little streamlets, pipes, and so on, by which the water is carried all over the garden to every plant, otherwise in the extreme heat of the sun it would be dried up. Planting needs wisdom, watering needs quite as much, and the piecing of these two works together needs that the labourers should be of one mind. It is a bad thing when labourers are at cross purposes, and work against each other, and this evil is worse in the church than anywhere else.

How can I plant with success if my helper will not water what I have planted; or what is the use of my watering if nothing is planted. Husbandry is spoiled when foolish people undertake it, and quarrel over it, for from sowing to reaping the work is one, and all must be done to one end. O for unity! Let us pull together all our days, even as we have done in this church hitherto.

We are called upon to notice in our text that *all the labourers put together are nothing at all*. "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth." The workmen are nothing at all without their master. All the labourers on a farm could not manage it if they had no one at their head, and all the preachers and Christian workers in the world can do nothing unless God be with them. Remember that every labourer on God's farm has derived all his qualifications from God. No man knows how to plant or water souls except God doth teach him from day to day. All these holy gifts are the grants of free grace. All the labourers work under God's direction and arrangement, or they work in vain. They would not know when or how to do their work if their master did not guide them by his Spirit, without whose help they cannot even think a good thought. All God's labourers must go to him for their seed, or else they will scatter tares. All good seed comes out of God's granary. If we preach, it must be the true word of God or nothing can come of it. More than that, all the strength that is in the labourer's arm to sow the heavenly seed must be given by his Master. We cannot preach except God be with us. A sermon is vain talk and dreary word-spinning unless the Holy Spirit enlivens it. He must give us both the preparation of the heart and the answer of the tongue, or we shall be as men who sow the wind. When the good seed is sown the whole success of it rests with God. If he withhold the dew and the rain the seed will never rise from the ground; and unless he shall shine upon it the green ear will never ripen. The human heart will remain barren, even though Paul himself should preach, unless God the Holy Ghost shall work with Paul and bless the word to those that hear it. Therefore, since the increase is of God alone, put the labourers into their place. Do not make too much of us, for when we have done all we are unprofitable servants.

Yet, though inspiration calls the labourers nothing, it makes a great deal of them, for it says, "Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour." They are nothing, and yet *they shall be rewarded* as if they were something. God works our good works in us, and then rewards us for them. Here we have mention of a personal service and a personal reward: "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." The reward is proportionate, not to the success, but to the labour. Many discouraged workers may be comforted with that expression. You are not to be paid by results, but by endeavours. You may have a stiff bit of clay to plough, or a dreary plot of land to sow, where stones, and birds, and thorns, and travellers, and a burning sun may all be leagued against the seed, but you are not accountable for these things; your reward shall be according to your labour. Some put a great deal of labour into a little field, and make much out of it. Others use a great deal of labour throughout a long life, and yet they see but small result, for it is written, "one soweth, and

another reapeth"; but the reaping man will not get all the reward, the sowing man shall receive his portion of the joy. The labourers are nobodies, but they shall enter into the joy of their Lord.

Unitedly, according to the text, *the workers have been successful*, and that is a great part of their reward. "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Frequently brethren say in their prayers, "A Paul may plant, an Apollos may water, but it is all in vain unless God gives the increase." This is quite true, but another truth is too much overlooked, namely, that when Paul plants and Apollos waters God does give the increase. We do not labour in vain. There would be no increase without God, but then we are not without God: when such men as Paul and Apollos plant and water there is sure to be an increase; they are the right kind of labourers, they work in a right spirit, and God is certain to bless them. This is a great part of the labourers' wages. I am rich, I am increased in goods, I have need of nothing when I see souls converted; my heart leaps for joy; my spirit is glad, and I am ready to sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord": but if it were ever to come to this, that I stood here Sunday after Sunday and saw no conversions, and the church rather going down than increasing, I should take it as an intimation that I had better take my plough somewhere else and scatter my seed on other soil. I would break my heart over non-success, or cry to God to break it, for he that worketh and getteth no fruit is disheartened in his labour. What would you farmers do? You are half inclined to give up now, because you have had two or three bad years; but what would you do if you never saw a harvest at all? Why, you would clear out and be off to the western prairies or to the bush of the southern continent, to see if the soil somewhere else would repay your labour. Do the same, brother ministers! If you have been at work in one spot for years, and have not led souls to Jesus, pack up your traps and go somewhere else. Do not for ever break your plough upon rocks. It is a big world, and there is plenty of good ground somewhere, let us seek it. If they persecute you in one city flee to another, and let the word of God be published all the more widely by your moving about.

III. So much upon the labourers. Now for the main point again. **GOD HIMSELF IS THE GREAT WORKER.** He may use what labourers he pleases, but the increase comes alone from him. Brethren, you know it is so in natural things: the most skilful farmer cannot make the wheat germinate, and grow, and ripen. He cannot even preserve a single field till harvest time, for the farmer's enemies are many and mighty. In husbandry there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip; and when the farmer thinks, good easy man, that he shall reap his crop there are blights and mildews lingering about to rob him of his gains. God must give the increase. If any man is dependent on God it is the husbandman, and through him we are all of us dependent upon God from year to year for the food by which we live. Even the king must live by the increase of the field. God gives the increase in the barn and the hayrick; and in the spiritual farm it is even more so, for what can man do in this business? If any of you think that it is an easy thing to win a soul I would like you to try. Suppose that without divine aid you should try to save a soul—you might as well attempt to make a world. Why, you cannot create a fly, how can you create a new heart and a right

spirit? Regeneration is a great mystery, it is out of your reach. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." What can you and I do in this matter? it is out of our pale, and beyond our line. We can tell out the truth of God, but to apply that truth to the heart and conscience is quite another thing. I have stood here and preached Jesus Christ, preached my whole heart out, and yet I know that I have never produced any saving effect upon a single unregenerate man unless the spirit of God has taken the truth, and opened the heart, and placed the living seed within it. Experience teaches us this. Equally is it the Lord's work to keep the seed alive when it springs up. We think we have converts, and we are not long before we are disappointed in them. Many are like blossoms on our fruit trees; they are fair to look upon, but they do not come to anything; and others are like the many little fruits which fall off long before they have come to any size: a cold night or a blight will come, and away go our hopes of a crop: it is just so with hopeful converts. He who presides over a great church, and feels an agony for the souls of men, will soon be convinced that if God does not work there will be no work done: we shall see no conversion, no sanctification, no final perseverance, no glory brought to God, no satisfaction for the passion of the Saviour. Well said our Lord, "Without me ye can do nothing."

What is the effect of all this upon your minds? Briefly I would draw certain practical lessons out of this important truth: the first is, if the whole farm of the church belongs exclusively to the great Master Worker, and the labourers are worth nothing without him, *let this promote unity among all whom he employs*. If we are all under one Master, do not let us quarrel. It is a great pity when ministers harshly criticise one another, and when Sunday-school teachers do the same. It is a miserable business when we cannot bear to see good being done by those of a different denomination who work in ways of their own. If a new labourer comes on the farm, and he wears a coat of a new cut, and uses a hoe of a new shape, shall I become his enemy? If he does his work better than I do mine, shall I be jealous? Do you not remember reading in the Scriptures that, upon one occasion, the disciples could not cast out a devil? This ought to have made them humble; but to our surprise we read a few verses further on that John and others saw one casting out devils in Christ's name, and John says, "We forbid him, because he followeth not with us." *They* could not cast out the devil themselves, and they forbade those who could. A certain band of people are going about winning souls, but because they are not doing it in our fashion, we do not like it. It is true they use all sorts of strange devices and wild excitements, but they do save souls, and that is the main point. Yet there are gentlemen who never converted half a soul in their lives who cry, "This is fanaticism." Go and do better before you find fault. Instead of cavilling, let us encourage all on Christ's side. Wisdom is justified of her children. The labourers ought to be satisfied with the new ploughman if his master is so. Brother, if the great Lord has employed you, it is no business of mine to question his right. I do not like the look of you, and cannot think how he can have such a fellow upon the farm; but as *he* has

employed you I have no right to judge you, for I dare say I look as queer in your eyes as you do in mine. Can I lend you a hand? Can I show you how to work better? Or can you tell me something so that I may do my work better? May not the Master employ whom he pleases? If a new hoe or a new rake comes out and you that have been doing work steadily for years open your eyes and say, "I shall not use that new-fangled thing"—are you wise? Do not use the new invention if you have not tried it and can work better in your own way; but let the other man use it who finds it a handier tool. If new methods of getting a hearing for the gospel are invented by the ingenuity of earnestness let the brethren use them; and if we cannot imitate them let us at least feel that we are still one, because "One is our Master, even Christ."

This truth, however, ought to *keep all the labourers very dependent*. Are you going to preach, young man? "Yes, I am going to do a great deal of good." Are you? Have you forgotten that you are nothing? "Neither is he that planteth anything." A divine is coming brimful of the gospel to comfort the saints. If he is not coming in strict dependence upon God he, too, is nothing. "Neither is he that watereth anything." Power belongeth unto God. Man is vanity and his words are wind; to God alone belongeth power and wisdom. If we keep our places in all lowliness our Lord will use us; but when we exalt ourselves he will leave us to our nothingness.

Next notice that this fact ennobles everybody who labours in God's husbandry. This passage makes my heart leap as I read it; my very soul is lifted up with joy when I mark these words, "For we are labourers together with God": we are God's fellow-workers: mere labourers on his farm, but labourers with him. Does the Lord work with us? Yes. "The Lord worketh with them with signs following." "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," is language for all the sons of God as well as for the great Firstborn. God is with you, brother; God is with you, sister, when you are serving him with all your heart. Speaking to your class concerning Jesus, it is God that speaks by you; picking up that stranger on the way, and telling him of salvation by faith, Christ is speaking with you even as he spoke with the woman at the well; addressing the rough crowd in the open air, young man, if you are preaching of pardon through the atoning blood, it is the God of Peter who is testifying of his Son even as he did on the day of Pentecost. O brother labourers, ours is a high honour, since the Father is with us and works by us. As Mr. Wesley said, "The best of all is, God is with us." The Lord of hosts is with us, and therefore we cannot fail. If we could in working with God be defeated, then God's own honour would be compromised, and that cannot be.

But, lastly, *how this should drive us to our knees*. Since we are nothing without God, let us cry mightily unto him for help in this our holy service. Let both sower and reaper pray together, or they will never rejoice together. As a church God has blessed us so richly, that in generations to come it will be spoken of as a wonder that God should so greatly favour a congregation for so many years; but it has been wholly and alone in answer to prayer. So far from supposing that our union and prosperity are in any measure due to me, I protest that the sole cause of all the soul-winning that has been done in this

place is to be found in the prayers of the saints. God in great mercy has given the spirit of prayer to you and to others who love me, and hence I am highly favoured. I am terribly afraid lest this prayerfulness should be damped down: I am jealous lest you should begin to think the preacher is something, and so should fail to pray for him. There is a thinner congregation when I am away, and therefore I am afraid that you have some reliance upon me, and do not expect a blessing if I am absent. Is it so? Having begun in the Spirit are ye now made perfect in the flesh? Have you begun to be of Spurgeon? This will never do. Brothers, this will never do. We must get rid of the tendency before it grows upon us. God can bless one man as well as another. I do not know that he always does so, but he can; and perhaps if you expected him to do so he would do so. If you came up to this house with the same prayerfulness for others as you apportion me, you would get the same blessing. I am weakest of the weak apart from God, therefore pray for me; but others are weak too, therefore pray for them also. Do let us pray mightily for a blessing. Pray always. Pray in your bed-chambers, at your family altars, at your work, and in your leisure, and also in this place. Come in larger numbers to pray for a blessing. We have many appointed prayer-meetings, keep them all flourishing. The windows of heaven are easily opened if our mouths and hearts are opened in prayer. If the blessing be withheld, it is because we do not cry for it and expect it. O, brother labourers, come to the mercy-seat, and ye shall see God's farm watered from on high, and tilled with divine skill, and the reapers shall soon return from the fields bringing their sheaves with them, though, perhaps, they went forth weeping to the sowing. To our Father, who is the husbandman, be all glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Cor. iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—178, 493, 958.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHAT THE FARM LABOURERS CAN DO AND WHAT
THEY CANNOT DO.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."—Mark iv. 26—29.

LAST Lord's-day morning our subject was the labourers upon God's farm and their great Master; and then we tried to show how far human agency was necessary in the work of the gospel. We also saw how thoroughly all holy results depend upon God, for neither he that soweth nor he that watereth is anything, but God who giveth the increase. We have much the same subject this morning, only it goes a little deeper, and yet more fully shows how far the labourer can go, and how far he cannot go; where man may enter with holy industry, and where no human work can possibly intrude. Our subject on this occasion will mainly be the measure and limit of human instrumentality in the kingdom of grace. If we shall be taught of the Spirit of God we shall find this Scripture to be full of instruction upon the matter.

It is remarkable that the parable before us is peculiar to Mark. No other evangelist has recorded it, but we do not think any the less of it on that account. If it had been told to us four times we should have been glad to hear the repetition, and would have given it a fourfold attention; as it is told us but once, we will give the more earnest heed to a voice which speaketh once for all. We are glad that the Holy Spirit led Mark to reserve this pearl out of the many excellent things which our Lord said which have been lost. John tells us that if a record of all the works which Jesus did could have been preserved they would have made a library so large that scarce the world itself could have contained all the books. Many of the things that Jesus said floated about, no doubt, for a time, and were gradually forgotten, and we have to be thankful to the Spirit of God for perpetuating this choice similitude by the hand of his servant Mark. Preserved in the amber of inspiration, this choice instruction is of priceless value.

Here is a lesson for sowers,—for the labourers upon the farm of God.

No. 1,603.

It is a parable for all who are concerned in the kingdom of God. It will be of little value to those who are in the kingdom of darkness, for they are not bidden to sow the good seed: "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" But all who are loyal subjects to King Jesus, all who are commissioned to scatter seed for the Royal Husbandman, will be glad to know how the kingdom advances, glad to know how the harvest is preparing for him whom they serve. Listen, then, ye that sow beside all waters; ye that with holy diligence seek to fill the garner of your God,—listen, and may the Spirit of God speak into your ears as you are able to bear it.

I. We shall, first, learn from our text **WHAT WE CAN DO AND WHAT WE CANNOT DO.** Let this stand as our first head.

"So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground": this the gracious worker can do. "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how": this is what he cannot do, it belongs to a higher power. Man can neither make the seed spring nor grow up, he is out of the field in that respect, and may go home "to sleep, and rise night and day." Seed once sown is beyond human jurisdiction, and is under divine care. Yet ere long the worker comes in again:—"When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle." We can reap in due season, and it is both our duty and our privilege so to do. You see, then, that there is a place for the worker at the beginning, and though there is no room for him in the middle passage, yet another opportunity is given him further on when that which he sowed has actually yielded fruit.

Notice, then, that *we can sow.* Any man who has received the knowledge of the grace of God in his heart can teach others. I include under the term "man" all who know the Lord, be they male or female. We cannot all teach alike, for all have not the same gifts; to one is given one talent, and to another ten. Neither have we all the same opportunities, for one lives in obscurity and another has far-reaching influence. Yet there is not within the family of God an infant hand which may not drop its own tiny seed into the ground. There is not a man among us who needs to stand idle in the market-place, for work suitable to his strength is waiting for him. There is not a saved woman who is left without a holy task; let her do it and win the approving word. "She hath done what she could." Something of sacred service is within the reach of everyone's capacity, whether it be the mother in the family, the nurse-girl with the infant, the boy in the school, the workman at the bench, or the nurse at the bedside. Those with the smallest range of opportunities can, nevertheless, do something for Christ and his cause. The precious seed of the word of God is small as a grain of mustard-seed, and may be carried by the feeblest hand where it shall multiply a hundred-fold.

We need never quarrel with God because we cannot do everything if he only permits us to do this one thing; for sowing the good seed is a work which will need all our wit, our strength, our love, our care. Holy seed sowing may well be adopted as our highest pursuit, and be no inferior object for the noblest life that can be led. You will need heavenly teaching that you may carefully select the wheat, and keep it free from the darnel of error. We must even winnow out of it our own thoughts

and opinions, for these may not be according to the mind of God. Men are not saved by our word, but by God's word. We are bound to see that we know the gospel, and teach the whole of it. To different men we must, with discretion, bring forward that part of the word of God which will best bear upon their consciences; for much may depend upon the word being *in season*, and not a chance sentence thrown out at random. We shall have enough to do if we look well to the seed-basket, lest, peradventure, we should sow tares as well as wheat, or should cast good seed wantonly, where it can only feed evil birds.

Having selected the seed, we shall have plenty of work if we go forth and sow it broadcast everywhere, for every day brings its opportunity, and every company furnishes its occasion. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." "Sow beside all waters." Imitate the sower in the parable, who was not so penny-wise that he would only cast the seed where, according to his judgment, all was good soil, but who, feeling that he had other work for his judgment besides the selecting of the soil, threw the seed right and left as he went on his way, and denied not a handful even to thorny and rocky soils. You, dear fellow-workers, will have enough to do if at all times, and in all places, as prudence and zeal suggest, you spread abroad the living word of the living Lord.

Still, wise sowers discover favourable opportunities for sowing, and gladly seize upon them. There are times when it would clearly be a waste to sow; for the soil could not receive it, it is not in a fit condition. After a shower, or before a shower, or at some such time as he that hath studied husbandry knows, then is the time to be up and doing. So while we are to work for God always, yet there are seasons when it were casting pearls before swine to talk of holy things; and there are other times when if we were slothful it would be a shameful waste of propitious seasons. Sluggards in the time for ploughing and sowing are sluggards indeed, for they not only waste the day, but throw away the year. If you watch for souls, and use hours of happy vantage, and moments of sacred softening, you will not complain of the scanty space allowed for agency. Even should you never be called to water, or to reap, your office is wide enough if you fulfil the work of the sower.

For little though it seem to teach the simple truth of the gospel, yet it is essential. How shall men hear without a teacher? The farm never brings forth a harvest without sowing. Weeds will grow without our help, but not so wheat and barley. The human heart is so depraved that it will naturally bring forth evil in abundance, and Satan is quite sure not to let it lie without a sowing of evil seed; but if ever a man's soul is to yield fruit unto God the seed of truth must be cast into it from without. Servants of God, the seed of the word is not like thistle-down, which is borne by every wind, nor like certain seeds wafted by their own parachutes here, there, and everywhere, but the wheat of the kingdom needs a human hand to sow it, and without such agency it will not enter into men's hearts, neither can it bring forth fruit to the glory of God. The preaching of the gospel is the necessity of every age; God grant that our country may never be deprived of it. Even if the Lord should send us a famine of bread and a famine of water, may he never send us a famine of the word of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and

how can there be hearing if there is no teaching? Scatter ye, scatter ye, then, the seed of the kingdom, for this is essential to the harvest. The spreading of the gospel is not a thing that ye may do or may not do, according to your pleasure, but it is a duty urgently needful, to be neglected at your peril. Ye can sow the seed, and the seed must be sown.

This seed should be sown often, for the times are such that one sowing may not suffice. Sow again and again, for many are the foes of the wheat, and if ye repeat not your sowing ye may never see a harvest. The seed must be sown everywhere, too, for there are no choice corners of the world that you can afford to let alone, in the hope that they will be self-productive. Ye may not leave the rich and intelligent under the notion that surely the gospel will be found among them, for it is not so: the pride of life leads them away from God. You may not leave the poor and illiterate, and say, "Surely they will of themselves feel their need of Christ." Not so: they will sink from degradation to degradation unless you uplift them with the gospel. No tribe of man, no peculiar constitution of the human mind, may be neglected by us, but everywhere we must preach the word, in season and out of season. I have heard that Captain Cook, the celebrated circumnavigator, was in one respect an admirable example to us. Wherever he landed, in whatever part of the earth it might be, he took with him a little packet of divers English seeds, and he was often observed to scatter them in suitable places. He would leave the boat and wander up from the shore. He said nothing to anybody, but quietly scattered English seeds wherever he went, so that he belted the world with the flowers and herbs of his native land. Imitate him wherever you go; sow spiritual seed in every place that your foot shall tread upon. Some of you will before long be at the seaside, or amidst the mountains of Switzerland, or in some other regions of the earth, in the search of variety and beauty; carry the heavenly seeds with you, and be not satisfied unless in every place you let fall a grain or two that may bring forth fruit unto your God. This is what you can do; mind that you do it.

Let us now think of what you cannot do. *You cannot, after the seed has left your hand, cause it to put forth life.* I am sure you cannot make it grow, for you do not know how it grows. The text saith, "And the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how." That which is beyond the range of our knowledge is certainly beyond the reach of our power. Can you make a seed germinate? You may place it under circumstances of damp and heat which will cause it to swell and break forth with a shoot, but the germination itself is beyond you. How is it done? We know not. After the germ has been put forth, can you make it further grow, and develop its life into leaf and stem? No; that, too, is out of your power. And when the green, grassy blade has been succeeded by the ear, can you ripen it? It will be ripened; but can *you* do it? You know you cannot; you can have no finger in the actual process, though you may promote the conditions under which it is produced. Life is a mystery; growth is a mystery; ripening is a mystery: and these three mysteries are as fountains sealed against all intrusion. How comes it that there is within the ripe seed the preparations for another sowing and another growth?

What is this vital principle, this secret reproducing energy? Knowest thou anything about this? The philosopher may say that he can explain life and growth, and straightway he will, according to the ordinary process of philosophy, bamboozle you with terms which are less understandable than the ordinary talk of infants; and then he will say, "There is the whole matter! It is as clear as possible." He cloaks his ignorance with learned jargon, and then calls it wisdom. To this day it still remaineth true of the growth of the commonest seeds,—“He knoweth not how.” The scientific man may talk about chemical combinations and physical permutations, and he may proceed to quote analogies from this and that; but still the growth of the seed remains a secret, it springs, “He knoweth not how.” Certainly this is true of the rise and progress of the word of God in the heart. It enters the soul, and roots itself ye know not how. Naturally men hate the word, but it enters and it changes the heart, so that they come to love it, but we know not how. Their whole nature is renewed, so that instead of producing sin it yields repentance, faith, and love, but we know not how. How it is that the Spirit of God deals with the mind of man, how he creates the new heart and the right spirit, how we are begotten again unto a lively hope, how we are born of the Spirit, we cannot tell. The Holy Ghost enters into us; we hear not his voice, we see not his light, we feel not his touch; yet he worketh an effectual work upon us, which we are not long in perceiving. We know that the work of the Spirit is a new creation, a resurrection, a quickening from the dead; but all these words are only covers to our utter ignorance of the mode of his working, with which it is not in our power to meddle. We do not know how he performs his miracles of love, and, not knowing how he works, we may be quite sure that we cannot take the work out of his hands. We cannot create, we cannot quicken, we cannot transform, we cannot regenerate, we cannot save.

This work of God having proceeded in the growth of the seed, what next? *We can reap the ripe ears.* After a season God the Holy Spirit uses his servants again. As soon as the living seed has produced first of all the blade of thought, and afterwards the green ear of conviction, and then faith, which is as full corn in the ear, then the Christian worker comes in for further service, for *he can reap.* “When the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle.” This is not the reaping of the last great day, for that does not come within the scope of the parable, which evidently relates to a human sower and reaper. The kind of reaping which the Saviour here intends is that which he referred to when he said to his disciples, “Lift up now your eyes, for behold the fields are white already to the harvest.” After he had been sowing the seed in the hearts of the Samaritans, and it had sprung up, so that they began to evince faith in him, the Lord Jesus cried, “The fields are white unto the harvest.” The apostle saith, “One soweth, and another reapeth.” Our Lord said to the disciples, “I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour.” Is there not a promise, “in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not”?

Christian workers begin their harvest work by watching carefully to see when men evince signs of faith in Christ. They are eager to see the blade, and delighted to mark the ripening ear. They often hope that

men are believers, but they long to be sure of it: and when they judge that at last the fruit of faith is put forth, they begin to encourage, to congratulate, and to comfort. They know that the young believer needs to be housed in the barn of Christian fellowship, that he may be saved from a thousand perils. No wise farmer leaves the fruit of the field long exposed to the hail which might beat it out, or the mildew which might destroy it, or the birds which might despoil it. Evidently no believing man should be left outside of the garner of holy fellowship, he should be carried into the midst of the church with all the joy which attends the home-bringing of sheaves. The worker for Christ watches carefully, and when he discerns that his time is come he begins at once to fetch in the converts that they may be cared for by the brotherhood, separated from the world, screened from temptation, and laid up for the Lord. He is diligent to do it at once, because the text saith, "immediately he putteth in the sickle." He does not wait for months in cold suspicion; he is not afraid that he shall encourage too soon when faith is really present. He comes with the word of promise and the smile of brotherly love at once, and he says to the new believer, "Have you confessed your faith? Is not the time come for an open confession? Hath not Jesus bidden the believer to be baptized? If you love him, keep his commandments." He does not rest till he has introduced the convert to the communion of the faithful. For our work, beloved, is but half done when men are made disciples and baptized. We have then to encourage, to instruct, to strengthen, to console, and succour in all times of difficulty and danger. What saith the Saviour? "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

The reaper is the man who gathers in the converts, and he fulfils an honourable and useful office. If I preach the gospel to-day, and some shall be converted, I shall be the sower; but if going home to the respective towns in which you live, you who have dropped in here as strangers, shall be received into the churches by your own pastors, they will be reaping what I have sown. I envy not my brother minister his success in gathering in the converts, but I rejoice with him. The sower and the reaper may well rejoice together, for our work is one, and we labour for one Lord.

Observe, then, the sphere of agency. We can introduce the truth to men, but that truth the Lord himself must bless; the living and growing of the word within the soul is the operation of God alone. When the mystic work of growth is done we are able to introduce the saved ones into the church. To bring them into the fellowship of the faithful is our work, and we must not fail to do it. For Christ to be formed in men the hope of glory is not of our working, that remains with God; but when Jesus Christ is formed in them, to discern the image of the Saviour and to say, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?" this is our duty and delight. To create the divine life is God's, to cherish it is ours. To cause the hidden life to grow in secret is the work of the Lord; to see the uprising and perfecting of that life, and to rejoice in it is the work of the faithful,

even as it is written, "when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

This, then, is our first lesson; we see what we can do and what we cannot do.

II. Our second head is like unto the first, and consists of **WHAT WE CAN KNOW AND WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW.**

First, *what we can know.* We can know when we have sown the good seed of the word that it will grow; for God has promised that it shall do so. Not every grain in every place; for some will go to the bird, and some to the worm, and some to be scorched by the sun; but as a general rule God's word shall not return unto him void, it shall prosper in the thing whereto he hath sent it. This we can know. And we can know that the seed when once it takes root will continue to grow; that it is not a dream or a picture that will disappear, but a thing of force and energy, which will advance from a grassy blade to corn in the ear, and under God's blessing will develop to actual salvation, and be as the "full corn in the ear." God helping and blessing it, our work of teaching will not only lead men to thought and conviction, but to conversion and eternal life.

We also can know, because we are told so, that the reason for this is mainly because there is life in the word. In the word of God itself there is life, for it is written—"The word of God is quick and powerful,"—that is, "living and powerful." It is "the incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever." It is the nature of living seeds to grow, and the reason why the word of God grows in men's hearts is because it is the living word of the living God, and where the word of a king is there is power. We know this, because the Scriptures teach us so. Is it not written, "Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth"?

Moreover, the earth, which is here the type of the man, "bringeth forth fruit of herself." We must mind what we are at in expounding this, for human hearts do not produce faith of themselves; they are as hard rock on which the seed perishes. But it means this,—that as the earth under the blessing of the dew and the rain is, by God's secret working upon it, made to take up and embrace the seed, so the heart of man is made ready to receive and enfold the gospel of Jesus Christ within itself. There is a something congruous in the earth to the seed which is sown in it, so that the seed is adopted and nourished by the soil. Just so is it by the heart of man when God makes it honest and good ground. Man's awakened heart wants exactly what the word of God supplies. Moved by a divine influence the soul embraces the truth, and is embraced by it, and so the truth lives in the heart, and is quickened by it. The man's love accepts the love of God; man's faith wrought in him by the Spirit of God believes the truth of God; man's hope wrought in him by the Spirit of God lays hold upon the things revealed, and so the heavenly seed grows in the soil of the soul. The life comes not from you who preach the word, but it is placed within the word which you preach by the Holy Spirit. The life is not in your hand, but in the man himself who is led to take hold upon the truth by the Spirit of God. Salvation comes not from the personal authority of the preacher, but through the personal conviction, personal faith, and personal love of the hearer. You, the sower, are thus taught by the parable

the spiritual life and growth are of God, and come by the seed and the truth more than by you. So far as the truth is concerned, its intrinsic power is the same whoever preaches it. It is not because such and such a preacher whom God has blessed, tells out the gospel, that therefore it lives in men's hearts. Oh, no; it is because of the truth itself, and because of the hearts themselves which receive the truth by the secret working of God's blessed Spirit. So much as this we may know, and is it not enough for all practical purposes?

Will there is a something which we cannot know: a secret into which we cannot pry. I repeat what I have said before, you cannot look into men's inward parts and see exactly how the truth takes hold upon the heart, or the heart takes hold upon the truth. Many have watched their own feelings till they have become blind with despondency, and others have watched the feelings of the young till they have done them rather harm than good by their rigorous supervision. In God's work there is more room for faith than for sight. The heavenly seed grows secretly. You cannot bury it out of sight, or there will be no harvest. Even if you keep the seed above ground, and it does sprout, you cannot discover how it grows; even though you microscopically watched its swelling and bursting, you could not see the inward vital force which moves the seed. Behind the veil which conceals the secret working of God in the mysteries of natural life and growth you cannot pry; and as for the divine life in man, it must for ever be hidden from all mortal eyes. The result of it you shall be able to see, and something about the way of its development you shall be able to know; but the actual *modus operandi*, the secret and innermost mystery of the new birth, it shall not be given to you to perceive. Thou knowest not the way of the Spirit. His work is wrought in secret, and thou canst not tell whence he cometh or whither he goeth. "Explain the new birth," says somebody. "My answer is, 'Experience the new birth, and you shall know what it is.'" There are secrets into which we cannot enter, for their light is too bright for mortal eyes to endure. O man thou canst not become omniscient, for thou art a creature, and not the Creator. For thee there must ever be a region not only unknown but unknowable. So far shall thy knowledge go, but no further; and thou mayest thank God it is so, for thus he leaves room for faith, and gives cause for prayer. Cry mightily unto the Great Worker to do what thou canst not attempt to perform, that so, when thou seest the salvation of men, thou mayest give him all the glory evermore.

III. Thirdly, our text tells us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT IF WE WORK FOR GOD, AND WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT. According to this parable we may expect to see fruit. The husbandman casts his seed into the ground, and the seed springs and grows, and he may expect a harvest. I wish I could say a word to stir up the expectations of Christian workers; for I fear that many work without faith. If you have a garden or a field, and you sow seed in it, you would be very greatly surprised and grieved if it did not come up at all; but many Christian people seem quite content to work on, and they never reckon upon result so much as to look for it expectantly. This is a pitiful kind of working—pulling up empty buckets by the year together. Surely I must either expect result for my labour and be glad, or else, failing to see it, I

must be ready to break my heart if I be a true servant of the great Master. We ought to expect results: if we had expected more we should have seen more, but a lack of expectation has been a great cause of failure in God's workers.

But we may not expect to see all the seed which we sow spring up the moment we sow it. Sometimes, glory be to God, we have but to deliver the word, and straightway men are converted: the reaper overtakes the sower, in such instances, but it is not always so. Some sowers have been diligent for years upon certain plots of ground, and apparently all has been in vain, till at the last the harvest has come, a harvest which, speaking after the manner of men, had never been reaped if they had not persevered to the end. This world, as I believe, is to be converted to Christ; but not to-day, nor to-morrow, peradventure not for many an age; but the sowing of the centuries is not being lost, it is all working on towards the grand ultimatum. A crop of mushrooms may soon be produced, but a forest of oaks will not reward the planter till generations of his children have mouldered into the dust. It is ours to sow, and to hope for quick reaping; but still we ought to remember that "the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain," and so must we. We are to expect results, but not to be dispirited if we see them not to-day or on the morrow.

We are also to expect to see the good seed grow, but not always after our fashion. We are nearly all of us like children, for still there are not many fathers, and like children we are apt to be impatient. Your little boy sowed mustard and cress yesterday in his little garden. This afternoon Master Johnny will be turning over the ground to see if the seed is growing. There is no probability that his mustard and cress will come to anything, for he will not let it alone long enough for it to grow. So is it with hasty workers; they must see the result of the gospel directly, or else they will leave off, and distrust the blessed word. Although the people may have taken the word into their minds and may be considering it, certain preachers are in such a hurry that they will allow no time for thought, no space for counting the cost, no opportunity for men to consider their ways and turn to the Lord with full purpose of heart. All other seeds take time to grow but the seed of the word must grow before the speaker's eyes like magic, or he thinks nothing has been done. Such good brethren are so eager to produce blade and ear there and then, that they roast their seed in the fire of fanaticism, and it never lives at all. They make men think that they are converted, and thus effectually hinder them from coming to a saving knowledge of the truth. I am solemnly convinced that some men are prevented from being saved by being told that they are saved already, and by being puffed up with a notion of perfection when they are not even broken in heart. Perhaps if such people had been taught to look for something deeper they might not have been satisfied with receiving seed on stony ground; but now they are content with that which comes of seed sown on unbroken rocks, they exhibit a rapid development, and an equally rapid decline and fall. Let us believingly expect to see the seed grow; but let us look to see it advance after the manner of the preacher,—firstly secondly, thirdly; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

You are in a hurry, my brother, but it were better to exhibit the patience of principle than the heat of passion. Let all men be in a hurry to be saved, but let those who are preaching the truth be content to see men convinced of sin, delivered from self-confidence, enlightened as to the grace of God, and thus led by sure steps to faith. Some of the best of Christians do not know the exact point at which they were converted; it was a gradual process, from green blade to ripe ear, and they cannot tell exactly when the actual fruit of faith was formed in them. Some of the most thoughtful minds are not jerked on a sudden into religion, but are brought gradually into light, even as the noon of day draweth on by degrees. With many there is at first nothing but a little blade, you cannot tell whether it is not grass and grass only; their feeling looks like a natural emotion caused by the fear of hell, and this might lead to nothing effectual. Then follows a little belief, so formed as to be like the wheat-ear of faith, and yet it may be only a notion: it takes time with such persons before they show the full corn of assured faith in Jesus. Growth is often, if not generally, gradual, and shall we wish to alter God's method of working? We may expect the seed to grow, but every soil is not equally sharp and speedy, and we must not demand of God that he shall work uniformly after the same rate of speed.

We may expect also to see the seed ripen. Our work will lead up by God's grace to real faith in those he hath wrought upon by his word, and Spirit, but we must not expect to see it perfect at the first. How many mistakes have been made here. Here is a young person under impression, and some good sound brother talks with that young person and asks profound questions. He shakes his experienced head, and knits his furrowed brows. He goes into the corn-field to see how the crops are prospering, and though it is early in the year, he laments that he cannot see an ear of corn; indeed, he perceives nothing but mere grass. "I cannot see a trace of corn," says he. No, brother, of course you cannot; for you will not be satisfied with the blade as an evidence of life, but must insist upon seeing everything at full growth at once. If you had looked for the blade you would have found it; and it would have encouraged you. For my own part, I am glad even to perceive a faint desire, a feeble longing, a degree of uneasiness, or a measure of weariness of sin, or a craving after mercy. Will it not be wise for you, also, to allow things to begin at the beginning, and to be satisfied with their being small at the first? See the blade of desire, and then watch for more. Soon you shall see a little more than desire; for there shall be conviction and resolve, and after that a feeble faith, small as a mustard seed, but bound to grow. Do not despise the day of small things. Do not examine the new-born babe about Calvinism in its different shades, to see whether he is sound after your idea of soundness; ten to one he is a long way off sound, and you will only worry the dear heart by introducing difficult questions. Speak to him about his being a sinner, and Christ a Saviour, and you will in this way water him, so that his grace in the ear will become the full corn. It may be that there is not much that looks like wheat about him yet, but by-and-by you shall say, "Wheat! ah, that it is, if I know wheat. This man is a true ear of corn, and gladly will I place him among my Master's sheaves." If you crush the blades, where will the ears come from? If you cut off the green

cars, where will the ripe ones be? Expect grace in your converts, but do not look to see glory in them just yet. It is enough if you see heaven begun: do not look to see it complete in them here below.

Expect, then, brethren—for you may expect it—to see a harvest, but do not expect to find every seed springing up. “There,” says one, “that is a discouraging word.” It may be so, but it is a true word. There is an old worldly proverb which saith, “Blessed are those who expect nothing, for they shall never be disappointed.” I do not believe in that proverb, but I believe in a moderate form of it: “Blessed are those who do not expect what is unreasonable, for they will not get it.” If you young people who begin to work for God expect that every word you speak will be useful to all who hear it, it will not happen, and you will grow discouraged; therefore I would raise your expectation as high as truth permits, and no higher. I would have you climb to the top of the ladder; but if I encourage you to go any higher you will soon be going down the other side, under the notion that you are ascending. I never like to see a man expecting what he will not obtain. Now, I know that some of our seed will fall among thorns, and some in stony places, and I do not despair when it happens to be so. I do not expect when I preach the gospel that everybody who hears it will receive it, because I know it will be a savour of life unto life to some, and of death unto death to others. I pull the net in, hauling away with all my might; but I know that when it comes to shore it will contain some queer things that are not fish, which will have to be thrown away, and I am heartily glad that there will also be in it a cheering number of good fishes. The results of our ministry in these days will be mixed, even as they were when Paul preached, and some believed and some believed not; we must be prepared for that, and yet I bid you let your expectations be very large, for you may have sixty or a hundred-fold of fruit from the seed if God be with you, and that will abundantly repay you, even if the crows and the worms should eat their share of the grain.

IV. The last head is this, WHAT SLEEP WORKERS MAY TAKE, AND WHAT THEY MAY NOT TAKE; for it is said of this sowing man, that he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed springs and grows up he knoweth not how. They say a farmer's trade is a good one because it is going on while he is abed and asleep; and surely ours is a good trade, too, when we serve our Master by sowing good seed, for it is growing even while we are asleep.

But how may a good workman for Christ lawfully go to sleep? I answer, first, he may sleep the sleep of restfulness born of confidence. You are afraid the kingdom of Christ will not come, are you? Who asked you to tremble for the ark of the Lord? Afraid for the infinite Jehovah that his purposes will fail? Shame on you! Your anxiety dishonours your God. You degrade him by a suspicion of his failing. Shall omnipotence be defeated? You had better sleep than wake to play the part of Uzzah. Rest patiently, God's will will be done, and his kingdom will come, and his chosen will be saved, and Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. Take the sweet sleep which God gives to his beloved, the sleep of perfect confidence, such as Jesus slept in the hinder part of the ship when it was tossed with tempest. The cause of God never was in jeopardy, and never will be; the seed sown is insured by omnipotence,

and must produce its harvest. In patience possess your soul, and wait till the harvest comes, for the pleasure of the Lord must prosper in the hands of Jesus.

Also take that sleep which leads to a happy waking of joyful expectancy. Get up in the morning and feel that the Lord is ruling all things for the accomplishment of his own purpose. Look for it. If you do not sleep you certainly will not wake up in the morning refreshed, and ready for more work. If it were possible for you to sit up all night and eat the bread of carefulness you would be unfit to attend to the service which your Master appoints for the morning; therefore take your rest and be at peace, and work with calm dignity; for the matter is safe in the Lord's hands.

Take your rest because you have consciously resigned the work into God's hands. After you have spoken the word resort to God in prayer, and commit it into God's hand, and then do not fret about it. It cannot be in better keeping—leave it there.

But do not sleep the sleep of unwatchfulness. The farmer sows his seed, but he does not therefore forget it. He has to mend his fences to keep the cattle out; it may be he has to drive away birds, to remove weeds, or to prevent floods. While he is not sitting down to watch the growth, he has plenty else to do. He never sleeps the sleep of indifference or even of inaction; for each season has its demand upon him. He has sown one field, but he has another to sow. He has sown, but he has also to reap; and if reaping is done, he has something else to do. He has never done; for in one part or other of the farm he is needed. His sleep is but an interlude that gives him strength to continue in his occupations. Consider that the parable teaches us that we have not to intrude into the domain of God; but with regard to the secret working of truth upon man's mind, we are to take our rest, and go on our way, serving our day and generation according to the will of God.

I want you, dear brethren and sisters, to come to that point this morning. "Lord, this is thy work. Lord, thou canst do thine own work. Lord, do thine own work—we entreat and beseech thee to do it. Lord, help us to do *our* work, both at the beginning of the chapter and at the end of the chapter, confident that thou wilt not fail in the middle of the chapter; but that thou wilt do thy work. Help us to exercise faith in thee, and to go about our labour in the confidence that thou art with us, and we are workers together with thee." Up, brethren, to the mountain, to the brow of Carmel this afternoon, up there and pray that God will send a shower of heavenly rain by his Spirit. Up, Elijah; put your head between your knees and cry till you are certain that the cloud, though it be little at first as a man's hand, will cover all the earth and water the land with blessing. Up and pray that God would sweep away all the doubts which, like locusts, devour the church to-day, and all love of sin and all rejection of Christ, that at this hour, even at this hour, God may glorify himself by the feeble hand of his sower while he scatters the seed. I beg your prayers, my dear and faithful friends, this afternoon, and this evening, that the word of the Lord may be divinely victorious. I stand back that God may work, and then come forward that God may work through me, and to him be praise for ever. Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HEART-DISEASE CURABLE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted."—Isaiah lxi. 1.

THIS text receives great lustre from the fact that it was one of the passages which the Saviour read when he entered into the synagogue at Nazareth and preached on the Sabbath-day. It is as fresh as ever, and we may still say of it, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is no small privilege that we poor under-shepherds should be permitted to take the same text as "that great Shepherd of the sheep." Our care must be to point to him in it. I intended to have preached from these words in Luke iv. 18, but when I looked at the Revised Version and found that the words were not there at all I was somewhat startled. I began to ask whether the omission was a correct one or not; and, without making pretence to scholarship, I feel convinced that the revisers are acting honestly in leaving it out. It was not in the original manuscript of Luke, but probably some pious person added it with the intention of making the quotation more complete. Whatever the intention may have been, and however natural the added words may appear, it is a pity that the unknown brother ventured to improve that which was perfect from the beginning. After revolving in my mind the fact, which I accept, that the passage was not written by Luke in his record, I have, I think, discovered the reason. When our Saviour unrolled the Book of Isaiah he read from it; but we are not certain that he read any one passage through. According to the Jewish law it was allowed in the prophets for the reader in the synagogue to skip, as we call it, to make selections, and read here a passage and there a passage, as he aimed at bringing out his subject. As the words are given in our Authorized Version you will notice that the portion of Scripture is not exactly like the prophetic words in Isaiah lxi., and that one sentence at least must have been taken from another part of the prophetic book. The Saviour did read from Isaiah lxi., but he also quoted other portions of Isaiah, probably taking a verse here and a verse there, and blending them in one, just as sometimes when I wish to give you a connected narrative I read on in a chapter, say to verse eight, and then miss a piece to verse sixteen, and again run on to verse twenty-four, and miss a few verses.

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again. The Saviour gave a *resumé* of texts which stood near each other upon the roll, and Luke records those upon which our Lord dwelt in his sermon.

"But," say you, "why, then, if it be so, did he omit the words which describe him as sent 'to bind up the broken-hearted'?" It may possibly have been his intention to leave out all allusion to healing. They were all looking out for him to work miracles of healing that day, and, therefore, he either omitted the sentence for the moment or else he did not dwell upon it; for I take it that Luke is not giving us exactly the Scripture, but the sense of it, and those points in the Scripture upon which the Saviour enlarged. He probably gives us notes of those sentences which were both read and expounded, and the Lord may have purposely refused to expound even if he read the sentence before us: "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." I say they were looking to him to work miracles of healing, and he did not mean to gratify them. We are told that "he could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." He did not intend to exhibit himself as a mere wonder-worker, and hence but lightly touched upon the sentence about healing till further on, when he saw, as he read their hearts, that they noticed the omission, and he therefore said to them, "Ye will surely say, Physician, heal thyself,"—which, being paraphrased, may run thus,—"You either did not read that passage, or else you lightly treated it, and yet a part of the Messiah's business is to heal the sick."

He perceived that by his own silence he had called their attention to the Scripture, and that they were ready to quote it against him by the challenge, "Physician, heal thyself. Do for your own family and city what you are said to have done at Capernaum." Our Lord paid no attention to claims based upon his dwelling in the place, for he knows no claim but that of mercy. He intended to exercise his sovereignty, and therefore he reminded them that healing was not sent to the lepers that were in Israel, but was sent only to Naaman, who had nothing to do with Israel, but was one of that Syrian nation which opposed and oppressed Israel.

Possibly he gave them nothing about healing that day, because he knew that they were not broken-hearted. He who reads men's hearts knew that they were captives to their unbelief, blinded by prejudice, and fettered by sin, and therefore he said, "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord;" but the tenderest part of the gospel being inapplicable to their case, he would not mention it in their hearing at that time. He would not cast it like a pearl before swine; but reserved it until they should lament their sin and adopt another mood. This, it strikes me, is the reason why the passage is not mentioned in the original gospel of Luke; and, if so, the omission is most instructive. Take heed lest you also should miss the sweetest word of the gospel through being in an unfit state to receive it.

Concerning the fact of difference between the Revised and the Authorized Versions, I would say that no Baptist should ever fear any honest attempt to produce the correct text, and an accurate interpretation of the Old and New Testaments. For many years Baptists have insisted upon it that we ought to have the Word of God translated in the best possible manner, whether it would confirm certain religious opinions

and practices, or work against them. All we want is the exact mind of the Spirit, as far as we can get it. Beyond all other Christians we are concerned in this, seeing we have no other sacred book; we have no prayer book or binding creed, or authoritative minutes of conference; we have nothing but the Bible; and we would have that as pure as ever we can get it. By the best and most honest scholarship that can be found we desire that the common version may be purged of every blunder of transcribers, or addition of human ignorance, or human knowledge, that so the word of God may come to us as it came from his own hand. I confess that it looks a grievous thing to part with words which we thought were part and parcel of Luke; but as they are not in the oldest copies, and must be given up, we will make capital out of their omission, by seeing in that fact the wisdom of the great Preacher, who did not speak upon cheering truths when they were not needed, and might have overlaid his seasonable rebuke.

Although we have not the sentence in Luke we have it in Isaiah, and that is quite enough for me. Indeed, if it were not in Isaiah, it is yet in other parts of the word. Its meaning pervades the Bible; it is the very genius and spirit of the Old and New Testaments, that the Messiah is sent to heal the broken-hearted. The gospel comes that the miseries of men may be assuaged, that the despair of the troubled may be cheered, and that joy may glitter on all sides like the dew of the morning when the sun ariseth.

I pray that the commission of Jesus Christ may be fulfilled this day to all the broken-hearted ones to whom the word of this message shall come. I hope there are none here who claim a right to healing; for, if so, the Lord will not listen to them. He will do as he wills with his own; for it is written, "He will have mercy on whom he will have mercy." The men of Nazareth claimed it in the synagogue that day, because he had lived among them, and so Jesus did not speak of healing them. Jesus giveth freely, but if any man demandeth aught of him as his due, he is jealous for his crown rights, and will pay no regard to such insulting demands. His healing work is not of debt, but of grace; not granted to presumptuous demands, but frankly bestowed as a free gift.

Now turn to the text. "He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Here are three matters for consideration: *heart wounds; heavenly healing; and an honoured Healer.*

I. First, let us think upon HEART WOUNDS. Many in this world live with broken hearts. Bad is a broken limb of any kind; bruised and wounded flesh is hard enough to bear; but when the fracture is in the heart, it is a sad business. Of all cases of distress, these are the most pitiable, and yet they are very frequently despised. When a man's spirit is cowed, and his heart is crushed, and he is despairing and utterly wretched, others get away from him, for he is dreary company. As the herd leaves the wounded stag to bleed and die alone, so do men instinctively avoid the society of those who are habitually gloomy. Their own desire after happiness leads men to escape from the miserable. Be joyful and you shall attract; be sorrowful and you will scatter. Job truly says, "He that is ready to slip with his feet is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease." The careless, the giddy, the superficial look with horror upon those whose thoughtfulness rebukes

them; while the prosperous and happy view them with reluctance because they remind them of sorrows which else they might forget. God has smitten some men, and their hearts are sore broken beneath his rod, therefore do their fellows hide their faces from them and despise them. Many blame them, and say they ought to shake off their gloom, and make an effort to be brave. I know not all they say; but certain it is that among the despised and rejected of men we find a company who carry with them heart-breaks day and night.

What wonder that they are *frequently avoided*. Common humanity calls us to help those who are injured in limb, and if there be an accident in the street a crowd will soon be gathered, and human kindness will exhibit itself; but if there be breakage of the heart, sympathy is soon exhausted, and love itself grows weary of her hopeless efforts to console. Those who are taugth of God will help the broken-hearted, but human sympathy is soon worn out because it is conscious of its inability to succour. You can set a limb, and the bones will grow; but what can we do in the resetting of a fractured heart? So, not liking to attempt the impossible, not caring to be continually baffled, it seems to be natural even to good men to be little anxious for the company of the desolate. Thus these unhappy ones are doomed to sigh out, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." I am afraid the story of Job is more often repeated than we think. When men do come to comfort the forlorn they often become embittered by their conscious failure, and begin to upbraid, till the poor tortured creature cries out in agony, "Miserable comforters are ye all." Therefore is the case of the broken-hearted a very hard one, because they are often despised and avoided. Happy is it for them that the Lord Jesus was sent to heal the broken-hearted.

Apart from this, it is *exceedingly painful* to have a broken heart. The heart is the centre of sensation, and hence its being broken involves the acutest of pangs. Sorrow hangs over the spirit in clouds which cannot be dispelled. Not only is their cup filled with sadness, but they sit by wells of sorrow. They have long forgotten the palm trees of Elim, and they are filled with the bitter waters of Marah. They rest not day nor night; how can they? No pain of the flesh can at all equal heaviness of heart. Give me all the aches and pains which my body can endure, but spare me the heart-ache: break me alive on the wheel, but let me not live to be broken-hearted, unless it be from the grand cause of penitence. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" When the arrows penetrate the soul, then the life-blood becomes as liquid fire, and the man is a mass of misery.

Besides, *it weakens us*, for when the heart is wounded the source of strength is impaired. A man who hath a strong heart can do anything. However weak, and feeble, and crippled, and diseased he may be in body, yet if he keeps up his spirits he can laugh at all his pains; but if the heart be crushed, what can he do? what can he hope? what can he endure? When fear is in the heart, the grasshopper becomes a burden, they that look out of the windows are darkened, and the keepers of the house do tremble. Far worse than the infirmities of old age are the miseries of a broken heart.

Ordinarily a broken heart is utterly *incurable*. How many times have

I had to learn this lesson to my own deep humiliation. It has been my happy, happy lot to speak to broken-hearted ones and see them gradually rise to be of good cheer when my Lord has spoken through me; but apart from his presence, I have argued, pleaded, explained, and persuaded, but all in vain. I have been almost dragged down into the wretchedness from which I hoped to rescue my fellow-man; for the sympathy I have felt for the desponding has well-nigh made me despond myself. What a variety of advice physicians give, and what is the good of it all? "Take a journey," they say, "into foreign lands; see new cities, or amuse yourself among the Alps." Yes, but if the man carries out with him a heart weary of life, he is apt enough to bring it back with him; and what good hath he gained? "Attend the baths; resort to the best physicians; use electricity; try strong exercise." This is all very well, for the body may need strengthening, or purifying, or arousing, or resting, but if the secret of the disease is a broken heart, and the hammer of God has smitten it, all the physicians in the world can be of no service: it shall end as with her of old, who spent all her living upon physicians and was nothing better, but rather grew worse. There is a cure for this grievous malady of which we shall speak full soon; but there is none in Gilead, or in the whole of nature's fields. Earthly pleasures and precepts are physicians of no value. Their ointments and their liniments, their outward oils and inward medicines are all of no avail to reach the core of our being and restore the heart. Magicians may charm never so wisely, but they cannot charm the hemlock from the furrows of the soul. When the heart is broken who can rivet the shattered fragment? If there had been a remedy anywhere else, the Lord Jesus would not have left heaven to heal; but inasmuch as he came on this errand, depend upon it nobody else could have performed it.

This heart-break in the end will be *fatal*, if it be not healed. We are frequently reading of men who fall dead suddenly, and the certificate states that they died of disease of the heart. That is a way which physicians have of saying that they do not know what ailed the deceased. The heart is very much like Africa, a region unexplored. Mentally and spiritually it is so, and when the heart is broken true life is well-nigh gone. Existence ceases to be desirable when the spirits fail. Such morbid minds say with Job, "My soul chooseth strangling rather than life." God grant that none may be so wicked and foolish as to end their own lives, and thus leap into the fire to escape the heat. Doubtless many have gone down to the grave, melted away in tears, dissolved in woe. Unhappy those who live refusing to be comforted, and die rejecting the one good and great Physician, who could heal them. May none of you be of that unhappy company. It is a sad story, this tale of the broken-hearted one; but in many a house it is well known. I invite you, beloved, if you do not know the disease, to pray that you never may; and if you have any friends afflicted with it, be very tender and gentle with them. I recollect the impression made upon my young heart, as a child, when I was taken to a house where there was a sad lady, always dressed in black, who said that she had committed the unpardonable sin. I remember the horror that I felt as I sat in the room with her, and wanted from very fear to get away, thinking she must be a dreadfully wicked woman. Yet she may have been one of the most

gracious of Christians, and it is probable that she came out into the light again ere she departed this life. These crushed ones are often the best of people. The fairest of our lilies are often broken at the stalk. Our ripest fruit is visited by the worm. Thank God, they shall yet have beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

II. We will now, for a little while, speak upon the HEAVENLY HEALING. The Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to bind up the broken-hearted, and surely it means all the broken-hearted. I do not think we have any right to restrict texts of Scripture, as we very often do, to square them to our theological systems. In this case you will hear the passage interpreted to mean the spiritually broken-hearted, and then people look within to see whether their pains are spiritual, and thus they are kept from going to Christ. I do not mind revised versions provided they really get at the original, but I do not mean to let *you* revise the version by putting in such qualifying words as you may think fit. What a host of revised versions we have! Everybody has one of his own. Certain texts which will not fit into our system must be planed and cut down. Have you never seen the hard work that some brethren have to shape a Scripture to their mind? One text is not Calvinistic, it looks rather like Arminianism: of course it cannot be so, and therefore they twist and tug to get it right. As for our Arminian brethren, it is wonderful to see how they hammer away at the ninth of Romans: steam-hammers and screw-jacks are nothing to their appliances for getting rid of election from that chapter. We have all been guilty of racking Scripture more or less, and it will be well to have done with the evil for ever. We had better far be inconsistent with ourselves than with the inspired word. I have been called an Arminian Calvinist or a Calvinistic Arminian, and I am quite content so long as I can keep close to my Bible. I desire to preach what I find in this Book, whether I find it in anybody else's book or not; and as I do not find "*spiritually*" in my text, I shall take the liberty of giving a wide range to this broken-heartedness.

- Many are broken-hearted from a *sense of guilt*. This is the best form of broken-heartedness in the world; when the hammer of God's law comes down with its ten strokes, and every commandment pounds the heart to powder, it is well. When a man once hears the law of God proclaimed from burning Sinai with voice of thunder he ceases to trifle and is sore afraid. He learns that God is angry with the wicked every day; "if he turn not he will whet his sword, he hath bent his bow and made it ready," his heart fails him as he hears this terrible declaration. Then is a man in bitterness as one that mourneth for his only son, even for his firstborn. Oh, that I should ever have lived to make my God my enemy, that ever I should have been so base, so ungrateful to my best friend! Oh, cursed heart, to have loved its idols and have hated the Most High! Some of us knew in the days of our conviction what it was to hate the light of day, and to dread the darkness of night, to long for our bed that we might sleep, and yet to toss there restlessly upon a pillow harder than Jacob's stone. O sin! sin! sin! If it be once felt, if the terrors of God once break loose upon an conscience, the misery reaches to agony, and the agony nears

to death. But, beloved, our Lord Jesus has come to heal the anguish of the conscience by declaring that there is forgiveness with God that he may be feared, and by showing how God can be just and yet the justifier of sinners who believe. Thus is it written, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin": "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Whenever the Lord Jesus is believingly received the heart-break of remorse is ended, and the sinner rests at the foot of the cross. When the Holy Spirit applies the blood of atonement, the blood of the heart's wound ceases to flow. The griefs of Jesus end our grief; his death is the death of our despair. Substitution is the charming word which opens the gate of hope. This form of heart-break, if it be present here this morning, is my Lord's own *specialité*; in dealing with this he is altogether at home, for he delighteth in mercy. I have seen him apply the liniments to the wounds with tender, downy-fingered hand, swathing the limb with bands so soft, and yet so strong, that the gash has closed never to open again. So speedy and so sure is his surgery that the broken heart has begun to sing as soon as he has touched it. Do it again, great Master; do it at this very hour. Say, poor sinner, "Lord, do it unto me." He can heal when all others have failed. He can heal YOU *now*.

"When wounded sore the stricken soul
Lies bleeding and unbound,
One only hand, a piercèd hand,
Can salve the sinner's wound."

Another brokenness of heart is felt by those who regard themselves as *outcasts*. Few of you have ever felt that dreadful weight upon the soul, as dreadful as a millstone about the neck. The woman whose sin may not be in God's sight more gross than that of others is yet regarded by society as utterly fallen and defiled,—a thing to be flung from hand to hand, and cast on the dunghill as a faded flower. Words cannot describe the shudder which passes over the mind of one betrayed and deceived when she perceives that she is henceforth numbered with castaways. A like thing happens to the man who has been guilty of embezzlement, or some other form of dishonesty. He is found out, prosecuted by his employer, set before the court, and sent to prison to be henceforth a branded criminal. Ah me! How dreadful must be the waking up on the first morning in a prison cell. He who was once courted will henceforth be shunned: he is a broken man without a character, marked by all as an offcast. Ah, poor man, poor woman, Jesus receives sinners such as you. Some of us have known what it is to feel as if we were shut out from hope and from the mercy of God. We thought that he would not hear our cries; it was of no use for us to pray, so our fears told us; God could not have mercy upon such gross transgressors, he must leave us to ourselves and to our sins. We thought that he had set us up to be the targets of his arrows, and to stand, like Pharaoh, the monuments of his wrath against the proud. Yet were our fears all false, for our Lord Jesus, who came to bind up the broken-hearted, has bound up all our wounds, and we are happy in him. Fallen ones, he will restore you and give you rest. It is the glory of the Christian church that it receives into its brotherhood the fallen and the outcasts as soon as they repent. The

world offers no room for repentance, but in the church all are penitents. When Jesus forms the centre of a church there will be a ring of sinners attracted. Do we not read, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him"? Never did he drive them back, but he welcomed them: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Listen, poor crushed one! However low you may have fallen, come to Jesus, for he will not cast you out. Come to his true servants, for it will be their joy to restore you. When the gates of respectability are shut the gates of mercy and Christian love are still open. Return, O wanderer; a welcome awaits you. Jesus will make you whiter than snow. Though you may well believe that he asks himself concerning you, "How shall I put thee among the children?" yet he will do it, for he lifteth the beggar from the dunghill.

"That Christ will receive him no sinner need fear,
The poorer the wretch the welcomer here;
Though you may be outcast and banished afar,
Your welcome is certain, come just as you are."

Another brokenness of heart is that of *utter helplessness*, in which a man feels that he is too feeble to fight the battle of life. He is not only given up by others, but he has given himself up. He floats like a deserted vessel, derelict, water-logged, abandoned. Sin has beset him, he has given way to temptations, and now Satan binds him fast. Perhaps he has backslidden from the profession of religion and brought great dishonour upon the name of Christ, and now he cries, "My last end will be worse than the first. I have crucified the Lord afresh, and shall die in my sins. I neglected the means of grace, I became slack in prayer, I turned my face away from God, and now he has left me, and I cannot get back again." Alas, for men who are bound with such fetters; the iron enters into their souls. There are some here who did run well; what did hinder them that they should not obey the truth? They have gradually slipped back, back, back, till now it is a question with them whether they ever knew the grace of God in truth at all. They are grieved to have it so, and long to be restored; but despair holds them. My gracious Lord Jesus Christ comes to you, backsliders, who are filled with your own ways, who labour and are heavy laden with the fear that you are cast away for ever, and he says, "Return, ye backsliding children." He will help you to return. He will draw you and you shall run to him. The love of Jesus has not changed; he loves even to the end. He will not cast away a soul that looks to him. O taste and see that the Lord is good. Return to him this morning. He will receive you graciously and love you freely, and you shall render to him again the calves of your lips as once you used to do; for Jesus healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

Many are broken in heart because they are *afflicted so heavily*. When sickness first comes to our door and we are new to it, it is a very unwelcome guest. New pains are sharp, fresh griefs appear intolerable; for as yet the bullock is unaccustomed to the yoke. By-and-by we bear our woes more patiently, but at the first the man afflicted with a disease which he knows will bring him to his grave is sadly cast down; the man who sees business ebbing away, and foresees bankruptcy, and perhaps

destitution, is crushed. Brother, if you receive Jesus Christ into your heart, he will ease you by teaching you a sweet submission to the divine will; he will tell you that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" he will explain to you the doctrine of providence; he will make you to consider the end of the Lord, for he is very pitiful even in his sharpest dispensations: and he will supply you with such strength of grace that you will be able to endure pain or poverty. Thus will he support you, till your heart shall become strong, and you shall bravely face the afflictions and conflicts of life.

Some are broken-hearted through *bereavement*. One laments, "I have lost my wife." Another bemoans herself, "I have lost my husband;" or a third cries, "My mother is gone;" or a fourth with motherly tenderness mourns the dearest child that ever nestled in a woman's bosom. "Alas," cries each one, "I can never survive the stroke!" We have all endured sorrow, but bereavements are a sharp sword. Friends can do little to fill up the great gap which death has made. Ah, it is indeed an aching void which is left in an affectionate heart when the dear object of love is torn away. The best of people in this respect suffer most. Herein is comfort from Jesus. The blessed doctrine of the resurrection cheers the darkness of the sepulchre. Jesus says, "Thy brother shall rise again." The blessed thought of the eternal felicity of those that we vainly would have detained below is a sweet recompense for their loss. We remember our Lord's prayer,— "I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." Sometimes in prospect of losing our beloved ones we pull very hard earthward, and cry, "Father, I will that they be with me where I am." Did you ever feel a pull the other way, and start, and look to see who pulls heavenward. You watch and see that it is Jesus praying, "Father, I will that they be with me where I am." Whenever Christ and you come to cross purposes I know you will yield, for you will gladly own that the dear ones are more Christ's than yours. Let them go. Jesus, we can part with all for thee. It is no parting, when we know that our beloved are with thee. Thus doth Jesus, who himself wept for Lazarus, heal broken hearts whose joy is buried with those they loved so well.

There are many other forms of this disease. I have known hearts to be thoroughly broken by *desertion*. One whom you loved and trusted proves false, and the early love of a true heart is broken like a potter's vessel. What desolation fills many a soul that once was blithe as the birds; for treachery wasteth like the scourge of war. When a choice friend betrays you, or a professed brother in Christian work, who ought to have held up your hands, weakens and opposes you, it is a blow upon the heart as when a bone is broken by the hammer. Yet is there consolation; for he who had his Judas and bitterly cried, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me," and he knows how to bind up such a broken heart, for he becomes a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and he makes us feel in the sweet tenderness and faithfulness of his divine companionship that we are not alone, for the Lord is with us. He is better unto us than ten friends. So long as his smile makes sunshine on our way, Ahithophel may join our enemies, and Judas may sell us for silver; but we are secure, for he will make the wrath of man to praise him, and neutralize its gall by the sweetness of his company.

I am certain that there is no form of broken heart present but what there is medicine for it in the Word of God, and in Jesus who is the word. The leaves of this tree are for the healing of nations. Christ Jesus brings a cure-all to those who are else incurable. In his dispensary there are remedies compounded by divinest art which will touch the heart and act upon it like a charm, till it shall throb with pleasure as much as it now palpitates with anguish. This is no quackery. His is a scientific system of surgery which has borne the test of ages, and has been proved by the experience of countless sufferers to be infallible. Here we stand, ourselves, living witnesses of his skill. He hath bound us up, and we are now saved from heartache, and made to praise him with our whole heart.

III. Our third theme is THE HONOURED PHYSICIAN, and this is the central point of the text. Jesus saith, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted." Observe, first, that this honoured Physician *gives personal attendance* to the broken-hearted. He says, "He hath sent *me* to bind up the broken-hearted." Daniel said, "My God hath sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths;" but as for you broken-hearted ones, you receive personal attendance from your Lord. The Lord hath sent Jesus Christ himself because the task needs a divine hand. The Lord's servants without their Lord can do no more than the staff of Elisha did when Gehazi laid it upon the dead child, but there was neither voice nor hearing. The great prophet himself is coming, and wonders will be seen among us. He is here at this moment in his own proper person, and he will not fail in any case that is brought to him. Many a great physician has so much practice that he is compelled to take a partner or an assistant, but my Lord is able to do all his work, and none can interfere in it. Jesus himself personally, with his own pierced hands, continues to bind up the broken-hearted. Does not this fact tend to comfort you already? If Jesus undertakes to uplift you it will be done. He is the consolation of Israel, appointed to comfort all that mourn. Come, old Simeon, take him up in your arms, and forget the infirmities of age! Come, widowed Anna, and give thanks to God for him who is the husband of the lonely heart! He will himself wipe all tears from the eyes of his people, and he will do it now. O you who in your youth are bearing the yoke of grief, and declare that your life is blighted, say so no more; for Jesus comes to help you, even he himself. Remember the record, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" the same sight shall gladden you.

This physician is *fully qualified*. He is called *Christos*, or Christ, which signifies anointed; "The Lord hath anointed me." I am sure that Jesus can cure broken hearts, because God has given him the Spirit, even the Comforter, to rest upon him without measure, that his words may drop with the oil of comfort. O, trust him now. He has all the fitness for his work that God can give him. He is complete, and we are complete in him. A broken heart needs oil to be poured into its wounds, and "Christ" is an oily name: he is christened a Saviour, anointed a healer. The good Samaritan poured in oil and wine; but here is heavenly oil in the hands of one who is himself the health of our countenance.

As if this were not enough, notice that our Lord is *commissioned*. "He has sent me," he says. First, "anointed me"; then, "sent me." Our Lord said to the blind man, Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, which is, being interpreted, *sent*. How I wish that you who are broken-hearted would go and wash in this pool, and find comfort in the blessed fact that the anointed is sent of God to you. The Great Father thought so much of you that he sent a special messenger to heal you; yea, sent the best one there was in heaven, to be a missionary to you. No other was fit to be second to him; but God emptied heaven of its superlative glory and sent his own Son down below that he might bind up broken hearts. I cannot imagine a failure of this Messiah—the sent one. This is the Shiloh for whose salvation Jacob waited, looking for him who should be sent. This is the Apostle, or sent one of our profession, sent on purpose that he might comfort all the heirs of sorrow. Jesus is carrying on a mission, a mission for the desolate. He is a missionary to the forlorn, commissioned to commiserate, appointed to relieve. Observe, then, his qualifications and his commission. He bears a diploma of the highest value. He is the royal physician; surgeon in ordinary to all bleeding hearts; O that you would put your mournful cases into his hands.

Remember also what he is *in person and character*, and I think you will at once say, "I will submit my broken heart to him, that he may heal me." For Jesus, your Physician, is one who knows heart-break by having felt it. He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." I will tell you one of the most terrible tormentors in the world, excelling even an Inquisitor,—it is an unfeeling comforter. Save me from a man who comes to console me wearing a face of marble and a heart of stone. His words put grit into your wounds, or what if I say—salt? Job knew this dreadful affliction. Look, then, at the reverse of the picture: the surest comforter is one who is touched with a feeling of our infirmity, seeing he was tempted in all points like as we are. "No," says the broken heart, "Christ never knew my pain." Ah, but he did. What is it? That you have been slandered? Jesus cries, "Reproach hath broken my heart." Is it that you are forsaken by friends? Is it not written, "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled"? Is it that you are forsaken by God? Did not Jesus cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me"? Is it that your cup is bitter? Did he not pray thrice that the cup might pass from him, and still the cup was not removed? He leads you through no darker rooms than he went through before, and in all he is so tenderly sympathetic with you that he is the best Physician you can desire.

Besides, how *gentle* he is, as a mother with her child; meek and lowly in heart, considerate, tender; there was never one like to him. He hath soft fingers for sore places, sweet liniment for sharp cuts, and precious balm for bleeding wounds. The oil with which he was anointed hath both perfume and unguency about it; it is so sweet that those who are far away may perceive it, and it is so rare an unguent that it works its way and touches wounds which nothing else could reach. Jesus hath great skill in bringing light into the dreary recesses of darkened minds.

Oh that you knew my Master. If you had seen him as my broken heart saw him on my first spiritual birthday, when I heard the word that saith, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth";

I say, if you had seen him as I then saw him you would have rushed to his feet for healing. I was at the ends of the earth: I thought I was ready to slip over the bounds altogether, and sink into the abyss; but in obedience to his command, I looked. It was the dim look of a half-blinded eye; I looked through my tears, but hardly hoped to see him. Still I looked: I turned my eyes that way, and I resolved that if I were lost it should be lying at Jesus' feet. I believed he was able to save me, and I left myself with him, and he has done great things for me, to which I cheerfully bear witness. He keeps on blessing me, and he will complete his work ere long. I know whom I have believed, and I rest in him. O dear hearts that are breaking, I wish you would do as I did: I would to God the same grace would lead you at once to fall at my Lord's feet. Swoon away into Christ's arms. Do not try to get stronger: be weaker, if weaker you can be. Be nothing, and let him be your all: die into his life.

Come, broken-hearted ones, do not try to bind yourselves up: you will only wound yourselves the more. Do not look for comfort into the black and horrible abyss of your own nature, but look to him whom God hath sent. Get right away from what you are to what *he* is. Have you a legion of devils in you? He is the devils' Master, and can turn them all out at once. Does the very Satan seem to hold you in his grip? He who of old hath fought the fiend and vanquished him will lead your captivity captive and take the prey from the mighty. If you must despair, despair yourself into Christ: I mean by that self-despair which is the next of kin to humble faith in Jesus drop into his hand. Faint upon Christ's bosom and lie there in happy helplessness. May the Lord disable you for anything else, and lead you to believe in his Anointed. God has sent you Jesus; will you not admit him? He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. Come, then, at once and believe in him whom God hath sent.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah lxi,
Luke iv. 16—30 (Revised Version).

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 2ND, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“This he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.”—John vi. 6.

OBSERVE, dear friends, how careful the Holy Spirit is that we should not make a mistake about our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that men are liable to think too little of the ever blessed Son of God, and that some, who call themselves Christians, nevertheless deny Christ's divinity, and are ever ready to forge an argument against the true and real deity of the Saviour out of anything which appears to limit his power or knowledge. Here is an instance of the care of the Spirit to prevent our falling into an erroneous conclusion. Our Lord consults with Philip, asking this poor disciple, “Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” Some might therefore have inferred that Jesus did not know what to do, but felt embarrassed. From this they would argue that Jesus cannot be Almighty God, for surely embarrassment is inconsistent with Omnipotence. Why should Jesus consult with Philip if he knows all things? Now, the Holy Spirit would have us beware of falling into low thoughts of our great Redeemer and Lord, and especially of ever being so mistaken as to think that he is not God; therefore he plainly tells us, “this he said to prove Philip, for he himself knew what he would do.” Jesus was not asking information or taking counsel with Philip because he felt any doubt about his line of procedure, or needed help from his disciple. He did not want Philip to multiply bread, but he desired to multiply Philip's faith. Take heed, therefore, dear friends, that you never think little of the Saviour, or impute any of his acts to motives that would lessen his glory.

Learn here, too, that we, being very apt to make mistakes concerning Christ, need daily that the Spirit of God should interpret Christ to us. Jesus simply asks the question of Philip “Whence shall we buy bread?” and we are at once in danger of drawing a wrong inference, and therefore the Holy Spirit tells us more about Christ that we may escape from that danger. By giving us more insight into our Lord's motives, he prevents our misjudging his actions. We must have the Spirit of God

with us, or we shall not know Christ himself. The only way to see the sun is by its own light; and the only way to see Jesus is by his own Spirit. Did he not himself say, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you"? No man can call Jesus "Lord" but by the Holy Ghost. The Spirit must come to each man personally, and reveal the Son of God to him, and in him. Therefore, do not let us take up the Bible and imagine that we shall at once understand it as we do another book, but let us breathe the prayer that the Great Author of its letter would himself give us grace to enter into its spirit, so as to know its meaning and feel its power. Even with the infallible word before you, you will miss your way, and fall into grievous error unless you are taught of God. The mercy is that it is written, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord"; and again, "We have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things." There is no knowing anything except by that unction, and by that divine teaching. What dependent creatures we are, since we make mistakes even about Jesus Christ himself unless the Spirit of God is pleased to instruct us concerning him! Lead us ever, O light of God!

Another thing we learn from the text before we plunge into it is, that our divine Lord always has a reason for everything that he does. Even the reason of his asking a question may be found out; or, if we cannot discover it, we may still be quite sure that there is a worthy reason. That reason in Philip's case certainly was not because of any want of wisdom in himself, but there was a reason,—“This he said to prove him.” Now, if there is a reason for all that Jesus asks, much more is there a reason for all that he does. We cannot tell the reason of election—why this man is chosen or that; but there is a reason, since God never acts unreasonably, though his reasons are not always revealed, and might not be understood by us if they were. Sovereignty is absolute, but it is never absurd. There is always a justifiable cause for all that God does in the kingdom of grace, though that cause is not the merit of the person whom he favours, for merit there is none. In the matter of your present trial and trouble, dear friend, you have been trying to spell out the design of the Almighty, but without success. Know you not that his ways are past finding out? In all probability this side of eternity you may never discover God's purpose in your present trial, but that he has a purpose is certain, and that purpose is a wise and kind one. It is such as you yourself would delight in if you were capable of understanding it. If you could have a mind like that of God, you would act as God does even in this matter which troubles you: at present your thoughts are far below those of God, and therefore you err when you try to measure his ways. If you have a quarrel with your heavenly Father about a bereavement or a sickness; end it at once with humble shame. There, child, if it ever comes to a question as to which is right—a poor, ignorant, inexperienced youth, or a great, good, wise Father—there cannot be a moment's deliberation; the Father's will must be better for the child than its own will. Be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live. Do believe in your Lord, and be quieted: Jesus knows what he is doing, and why he is doing it. For the loss of your health there is a reason. For those pains of body, for that depression of spirit, for that want of success in business, even for the permission of the cruel

tongue of slander to inflict its wounds upon you, there is a reason; and possibly that reason may lie in the words of our text, "This he did to prove him." You must be tested. God does not give faith, or love, or hope, or any grace without meaning to prove it. If a man builds a railway-bridge, it is that engines may go over it, that so its carrying power may be proved. If a man makes a road, it is that there may be traffic over it, every rod of it will be proved by wheels and hoofs. If he only makes a needle it must be tested by the work it can do. When the pillars that now support these galleries were cast, they were made with the object of supporting a great weight, and these twenty years they have bravely endured the pressure: it would have been an idle thing to have set them up and placed no weight upon them. So when God made you, my brother, to be strong in the Lord he meant to try every ounce of your strength; for that which God makes has a purpose, and he will prove it to see that it is equal to its design. I do not think that a single grain of faith will be kept out of the fire; all the golden ore must go into the crucible to be tested. You have heard of the Birmingham proving-houses for the barrels of guns; now, the great Maker of believers proves all whom he makes in his factory of grace with heavy charges of affliction, and only those that can bear the test shall receive his mark. When no other explanation of a providence can be found you may always fall back upon the belief that—this he said and this he did to prove you.

Let us at once come to the text, which seems to me to have much comfort in it. May the Holy Spirit lead us into it.

First, here is a question for Philip—"Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"—a question with a purpose. But, secondly, there is no question with the Master, for he himself knew what he would do. And, thirdly, if we enter into the spirit of the Master there will be an end of questions with us, for we shall be perfectly satisfied that he knows what he is going to do.

I. First, then, HERE IS A QUESTION FOR PHILIP, as there have been many questions for us. Jesus put this question to Philip *with the motive of proving him* in several points. He would thus try his faith. As one has well said, "He wanted not food of Philip, but faith." The Master enquires, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" What will Philip say? If Philip has strong faith he will answer, "Great Master, there is no need to buy bread; thou art greater than Moses, and under Moses the people were fed with manna in the wilderness; thou hast but to speak the word, and bread shall be rained around the host, and they shall be filled." If Philip had possessed great faith he might have replied, "Thou art greater than Elisha, and Elisha took a few loaves and ears of corn and fed therewith the sons of the prophets. O wonder-working Lord, thou canst do the same." If Philip had displayed greater faith still, he might have said, "Lord, I do not know where bread is to be bought, but it is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' Thou canst refresh these people without visible bread: thou canst satisfy their hunger and fill them to the full, and yet they need not eat a single mouthful; for it is written, 'By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.' Speak thou the word, and they will be at once refreshed." This question,

was the treasurer, and, unless we are much mistaken, Philip was the butler. It was Philip's business to see that they had bread in the wallet, and his part to make some little provision when the band of disciples went into desert places. Even so, there are brethren here present whose official business it is to care for the souls of men. Among these are ministers, missionaries, Sunday-school teachers, deacons, elders, district visitors, Bible-women, and the like. If the Lord does not say to others, "What shall we do for London?" he says it to us. The question is sent to prove us whether we are fit for our office, or whether we have taken upon ourselves a position for which we are not qualified, because we have no heart for it. Christ asks *us* especially, but I think he also asks all those whom he has made priests and kings unto God, "Whence shall we buy bread? How shall we feed this great city?" The question comes to prove us because it is upon us that this burden ought to be laid.

And perhaps it came to Philip because he was not quite so forward in the school of grace as some were. Philip did not make a very wise remark when he said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," for our Lord answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" He was evidently slow in learning. I do not think that Philip was the most stupid of the twelve, but I am sure that he was not the most intelligent. James and John and Peter were the first three: Andrew and Thomas followed close behind, and probably Philip was close after them. Perhaps Philip was number six; I do not know; but certainly the Saviour selected him as not the lowest in the class, yet not the highest, and he said to him, "Whence shall we buy bread?" These people in the middle position very much want proving for their own satisfaction. The lowest kind of Christians are so feeble that they can hardly bear proving. Poor souls, they need encouraging rather than testing, and therefore the greatest problems are not often pressed upon them. On the other hand, the highest kind of Christians do not so much require testing, for they make their calling and election sure. The middle sort most need proving, and they make up, I am afraid, the great bulk of the rank and file of the army of God. How many there are who may be described as half instructed, half enlightened, and to these the Lord puts the question, "Whence shall we buy bread?" This he says that he may prove them.

Note well that *the question which the Saviour put to Philip to prove him answered its purpose.* It did prove him. How it proved him I have shown you already. It answered its purpose because it revealed his inability. "Whence shall we buy bread?" Philip gives it up. He has made a calculation of what would *not* suffice even to give every man a little refreshment, and that is all his contribution to the work: he has not even a loaf or a fish which he can produce to make a start with. Philip is beaten. What is more, his faith, being proved, is beaten too. "Oh, good Master," he seems to say, "the people cannot be fed by us. We cannot buy bread—we—not even you and I. Thou art the Lord, and thou canst do great things; yet my faith is not strong enough to believe that *we* could buy bread enough for all these thousands of people." So the question answered its purpose. It tested Philip's

righteousness is not to be looked upon as a dream, but to be practically considered.

The question also tried Philip's *sympathy*. Jesus by this query moved Philip's heart to care about the people. The other disciples said, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals." Jesus, perhaps, noticing a little more tenderness in Philip than in the others, said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" It was putting great honour upon Philip to associate him with himself; but perhaps he saw in him a sympathetic soul, and Christ loves to work with sympathetic agents. One thing I notice—that God seldom uses greatly a man who has a hard heart, or a cold heart. Warmth within ourselves can alone create warmth in others. A man must love people, or he cannot save them. A minister must have an intense desire that his congregation should be saved, and must get into sympathy with Jesus upon that subject, or else Jesus will not make use of him. So our Lord sought to stir up Philip's sympathy. "Come, Philip: what shall you and I do? Whence shall *we* buy bread to give them to eat?" I do not think Philip failed altogether there. He had not such sympathy with his Master as he ought to have had, but he had a measure of it. I trust that our God has given to us also some communion with his dear Son in his love to the souls of men; and so this question comes to prove us.

Let us not be wanting either in faith, or love, or sympathy. God grant that we may abound in all these through the effectual working of his Holy Spirit; then shall we be fitted to be workers together with him.

But why was that question put *to Philip*? Why is a special question put to some one of you, or a peculiar trial sent to one of you? It was sent to prove him it is said; but why to prove *Philip*?

Well, I think the Saviour spoke to Philip because Philip was of Bethsaida. They were near Bethsaida, and so Jesus said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" Every man should think most of the place where he lives. I want Jesus to say to some of you, "What shall we do for London?"—because many of you are Londoners—possibly born within the sound of Bow bells, or within the postal district. You belong to the four millions of this great province—nay this great nation, of a city, and it is a solemn responsibility to be a citizen of the greatest city in the world. If the Lord does lay London on anybody's hearts, he would naturally lay it upon the hearts of those who live in it; just as he said to Philip, "Whence shall we buy bread?" If he associates anybody with himself in the evangelization of a village or town, it will naturally be a person either born there, or living there. I know that the old proverb declares that the cobbler's wife goes barefoot, and sometimes a man will care for people thousands of miles away, and not look to his own house or to his own neighbourhood, but it should not be so, for it is to Philip, the Bethsaida man, that the message comes about the people when they are near Bethsaida—"Whence shall we buy bread?" It is said to prove him: and to you, brother Londoner, questions about this great city are sent to prove you.

It is also probable that it was Philip's department to attend to the providing for the little company of twelve and their Leader. Judas

you have had your say, and shown the difficulty of the task. And then I like Andrew to get up and say, "It is a very difficult task, but still we must do what we can do, and as we have these five loaves and two small fishes we must at least put these before the Lord, and leave it with him as to what is to be done." All this is better than shirking the question altogether, and leaving the crowd to starve.

Philip had his faculties exercised. Christ tried his arithmetic; he tried his eyesight; he tried his mind and spirit; and this prepared him to go and serve at the monster banquet which followed. A man never does a thing well till he has thought about it; and if Philip had not thought about how to feed the multitudes he would not have been a fit man to be employed in it. It prepared him also to adore his Master after the feast, for Philip would say when the meal was over, "The Master asked me how it was to be done, but I could not tell him, and now, though I have had a share in doing it, he must and shall have all the glory. He multiplied the fishes, and increased the loaves. My poor faith can take no glory to itself. He did it. He did it all." Perhaps some question comes to you, my brother, about the Lord's work—"How can it be done? How can England be evangelized? How can the masses be reached? How can the world be made to hear the gospel?" Whatever the question is which is put to you, it is a question sent on purpose to do you good, and benefit your soul, and to lead you to magnify the Lord all the more when the miracle of grace is done.

II. Now I come to the second part of the subject, and that is, that **THERE WAS NO QUESTION WITH JESUS.** The question was with Philip, but Christ had no question "This he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do."

Let us take these words and pull them to pieces a minute. "*He knew.*" He always does know. "Ah," says one, "I am sure I do not know what I shall do." No, dear friend, and yet you have been taking advice, have you not? That is a splendid way of confusing yourself. I hear you cry in bewilderment, "I do not know. I have been to everybody, and I do not know what I shall do." That is a chronic state with us when we puzzle our own poor brains; but Jesus knew what he would do. This is sweet comfort; Jesus knows. He always knows all about it. He knew how many people there were. He knew how much bread it would take: he knew how many fish he would want, and how he meant to feed the crowd, and send them all away refreshed. He knew all before it happened. Tried brother, Jesus knows all about *your* case and how he is going to bring *you* through. Do not think that you can inform him as to anything. "Your heavenly Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him." Prayer is not meant for the Lord's information. The question is not put to you that you may instruct him, but that he may instruct you. He made the heavens and the earth without you. With whom took he counsel? Who instructed him? And he will bring you through this present trial of yours without needing to add your poor wisdom to his infinite knowledge. He knows.

Jesus *knew what he would do.* He meant to do something; he was quite ready to do it; and he knew what he was going to do. We embarrass ourselves by saying, "Something must be done, but I do

not know who is to do it." The Saviour knew that something must be done, and he knew that he was going to do it himself. He was not in a hurry, he never is: "He never is before his time, he never is too late." Our blessed Master has glorious leisure, because he is always punctual. Late people are in a hurry; but he, being never late, never hurries. He does everything calmly and serenely, because he foresees what he will do. Jesus knows, dear friend, concerning you, not only what you will do, but what *he* will do. That is the point, and he means to do some great thing for you and to help you. He means also to bring this city and this nation to his feet. He means that every knee shall bow to him, and that the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. He knows what he means to do.

He knew, moreover, *how he meant to do it*. He knew precisely the way and method which he intended to use. He perceived long before Andrew told him that there was a lad somewhere in the crowd with five barley cakes. When the lad set out that morning, I cannot make out what made him bring five barley loaves and fishes into that crowd; except the Master had whispered in his heart, "Young lad, take with you a good lunch. Put those barley cakes into the basket, and do not forget the fishes. You do not know how long you may be from home." Nature bade him provide for contingencies, but then nature is God's voice when he chooses to make it so. He was a hungry, growing lad with a fine appetite, and he meant to be well provided for; but had he ever thought in his mind that these strangely providential cakes would multiply so as to feed that mass of people? Where is the man that is to be the universal provider? Where is the chief of the commissariat? It is that youth, and that is the whole of his storehouse. He is carrying a magazine of victuals on his back—in that basket. The Saviour knew that. And he knows exactly, dear friend, where your help is to come from in your hour of trouble. You do not know, but he does. He knows where the ministers are to come from that will stir up this city of London; and he knows in what style and manner they shall come, and how they shall get at the masses. When everybody else is defeated and nonplussed, he is fully prepared. He knew that those loaves and fishes would be fetched out in due time to be the basis of a banquet; he knew that he would bless them, break them, multiply them, and give them to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. Everything was arranged in his mind, and as much fixed as the rising of the sun.

Once more, *he did it as one who knew what he was going to do*. How does a man act when he knows what he is going to do? Well, he generally proceeds in the most *natural* way? He knows that he is going to do it; so he just goes and does it. Can you conceive that a miracle was ever performed in a more natural style. If this had been a Roman Catholic miracle, they would have thrown the loaves up in the air, and they would have come down mysteriously transformed and multiplied a million times; all popish miracles, if you observe, have a great deal of the theatrical and showy about them. They are totally distinct from the miracles of Christ. He does this miracle in the most natural way in the world, because it is virtually the same miracle which Christ works every year. We take a certain quantity of wheat, and put it into the

ground, and, in the long run, the end of it is that it is multiplied into loaves of bread. Certain fishes are in the sea, and they increase into great shoals. The sown wheat passes through the same operation in the ground in the same hands—in God's hands, but it comes out loaves of bread; and that is precisely what came of our Lord's action. He took a little into his own blessed hands, and brake it, and it kept on multiplying in his hands, and in the hands of his disciples, till they were all filled.

He knew what he was going to do, and so he did it naturally, and did it *orderly*. It is not so when a man does not know what he is to provide for. We have a large meeting, and there is provision made for tea, and three times as many come as you have provided for. What a hurry! What a scurry! What a running to and fro! Jesus never conducts his matters in that way. He knew what he was going to do, and, therefore, he bade the men sit down on the grass; and they sat down like so many children. Mark tells us that they sat down in rows by fifties and by hundreds; they were arranged as if each one had been specially set to his plate, and found his name laid upon it. Moreover, there was much grass in the place, so that the hall was carpeted in a way that no firm in London could have done it. The feast was conducted as orderly as if there had been notice given seven days beforehand, and a contractor had supplied the provisions. Nothing could have been done in a better way, and all because Jesus knew what he would do.

Moreover, he did it very *joyfully*. He took bread and blessed it. He went about it with great pleasure. I should have liked to have seen his face as he looked on these poor famishing people being fed. Like a good host, he cheered them with his smile, while he blessed them with the food.

And then he did it so *plentifully*, for he knew what he would do; so he did not come half provided, or stint them so that every man should have "a little." No; he knew what he would do, and he measured their appetites exactly, a difficult thing when you have a number of hungry people to feed. He provided all that they wanted, and afterwards there was provision left for the head waiters, so that each one should have a basketful for himself; for they took up of the fragments twelve basketfuls—one for each of the head waiters.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the matter of bringing in his own elect, is going about it, I am quite certain, knowing what he is going to do; and when you and I see the end of the great festival of mercy we shall say, "Blessed be the Lord! We were in a great worry; we were in sore trouble; but our Lord has done it easily, and thoroughly. There has been no muddle, no crowding, no passing over of anybody. Blessed be his name! He has not done it by chance or through fortunate circumstances; but he knew what he would do, and he has planned it all through from the beginning to the end in such a way that principalities and powers in heaven shall sing for ever of the grace and love and wisdom and power and prudence wherein he has abounded towards his people." Oh, but if we could see the end as well as the beginning we should begin even now to exalt the name of Jesus our Saviour, who foreknows all his work, and never deviates from his plan.

III. I conclude by saying that because there is no question with Christ, though he puts questions to us, THERE OUGHT TO BE NO QUESTION OF A DOUBTFUL CHARACTER ANY LONGER TO US. Let me mention three questions and I have done.

The first question that troubles a great many people is, "*How shall I bear my present burden?*" How shall I endure this suffering? How shall I get a living?" That question is sent to you to prove you; but do remember that there is no question with Christ as to how you will get through, for "as thy day so shall thy strength be," and he will keep his saints, even to the end. Therefore let there be no question with you, for Jesus himself knows what he will do. You came here to-night very distressed, and you said, "I wish I might get a word to tell me what I should do." You will not get half a word as to what you shall do, but you shall hear a word of a different sort. Jesus knows what HE will do; and what he will do is infinitely better than anything you can do. Your strength, my friend, is to sit still. Roll your burden upon the Lord. Do the little you can do, and leave the rest with your heavenly Father. This is the answer from the Urim and the Thummim for you,—Jesus knows what he will do.

There is that other question, which I have already mooted: *What is to be done with this great city?* I had the great privilege of being able to preach yesterday afternoon in one of our eastern suburbs, and setting out from my own house early in the morning, I went on riding, riding, upon one railway and another till I think I must have been journeying for fully two hours and a half before I had passed from one end of London to another. What a city of magnificent distances! It seems as if there was not a green tree which the builders will not cut down, nor a grassy meadow which they will not turn into ugly streets. "Replenish the earth," indeed? It is replenished. The dead earth is buried away beneath the abodes of living men. As for creatures of our race, what myriads there are of them!—And, then, as you go along with a Christian friend, he says, "There is a chapel wanted here." Or "There is a little chapel here, but not one person in fifty goes to a place of worship." Then you arrive at another suburban place, and your guide will say, "Here are people anxious for the gospel, but there is nobody to take it to them." I went along yesterday sorely burdened, and questioning in my heart, "What shall we do?" I kept thinking "You had better not ask yourself that question, for you cannot do much towards answering it, and it will only worry you." And yet it came back to me, "How shall we buy bread for this multitude?" My Lord and Master would say "*We.*" In my heart I wanted him to leave me out, but he would not. He never could have said, "How shall I buy bread?" because he knows that; but he put it to me, and I felt that I was a hindrance for making it a question at all, for he only makes it a question to me for my sake. O that we had men and money to send out ministers and to build places for them to preach in. We have preachers ready in the College, but I have no means for building places of worship. Surely many of you must have been burdened with the hugeness of this city. But, dear, dear, this is like one drop of rain in a great shower compared with the whole world that lieth in the wicked one. How is this world to be enlightened? It is no question with

Jesus, and, therefore, it should never be an unbelieving question with us. "Can these dry bones live?" Let us answer "Lord, thou knowest." There will we leave it. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above what we ask, or even think, and we may depend upon it that if he has sworn by himself that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess to him, it shall be so, and he shall have the glory.

One other question should be mentioned. It is this. Has the Lord put into the heart of any unconverted person the question,—"*What must I do to be saved?*" And is that question perplexing any of you? I am glad it is so, but I hope you will turn to the right place for an answer. I hope you are enquiring,—Lord, what wouldst thou have *us* to do? Do you know why that question is put to you? It is to prove you, and to humble you. It is meant to make you feel the impossibility of salvation by your own works, that you may submit yourself to the righteousness of God, and be saved by faith in Christ Jesus. Remember that there is no question with Christ about how you are to be saved. In fact, that question was settled—when shall I say? Settled when he died? No, settled long before that: it was decided in the everlasting covenant before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their round. God had then regarded his son as the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world, and to this day the word still stands—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Look unto him and be saved. There is no question about the possibility of your salvation, or about Christ's ability to save you. The question in your heart, "What must I do to be saved?" is put there to prove you; but Jesus himself knows what he will do. What a blessed word is that! He knows how he will pardon, comfort, regenerate, instruct, and lead you. He knows how he will keep you to the end by his unchanging grace. He knows how he will preserve you, and sanctify you, and use you, and glorify his own name by you, and take you up to heaven, and set you upon his throne, and make all the angels wonder and adore, as they see what he will do. God bless you for Jesu's sake. "Amen."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—210, 701, 681.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John vi.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ZIKLAG; OR, DAVID ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." "And David enquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."—1 Samuel xxx. 6 and 8.

We ought to be deeply grateful to God for the inspired history of the life of his servant David. It was a great life, a vigorous life, a life spent in many positions and conditions. I almost rejoice that it was not a faultless life, for its failings and errors are instructive. It is the life of a man after God's own heart; but still, the life of one who went astray, like a lost sheep, and was recovered by the great Shepherd's grace. By this fact he comes all the nearer to us poor, faulty men and women. I would venture to apply to David the description which has been applied to the world's own poet—

"A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

Each one may find something like himself in the long, eventful, and chequered life of the son of Jesse. Among other things we learn this, that where there is faith there is sure to be trial; for David, though he trusted God so heartily, had good need of all the faith he possessed. In his early days he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains by Saul, and was constantly in jeopardy of his life. He had so choice a treasure of faith about him, that Satan was for ever trying to plunder him of it. Still, the worst trials that David suffered arose not out of his faith, but out of his want of it. That which he did to avoid trouble brought him into deeper distress than ordinary providences ever caused him. He left the country where he was so ill at ease, which was, nevertheless, thy land, O Emmanuel, and he went away into the land of the Philistines, expecting there to escape from further turmoil. In so doing

No. 1,606.

he transgressed, and fresh trials came upon him, trials of a worse kind than those which had happened to him from the hand of Saul. Brethren, the poet said—

“ The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,”

and he spake truly; for “in the world ye shall have tribulation.” If you have faith it must be tried, and should that faith fail you must be tried still more. There is no discharge from this war: difficulties must be faced. This is the day of battle, and you must fight if you would reign. You are like men thrown into the sea, you must swim or drown. It is useless to expect ease where your Lord had none. If you adopt the paltry shifts suggested by unbelief, not even then shall you avoid affliction; the probabilities are that you will be taken among the thorns and scourged with the briars of the wilderness. However rough the king’s highway may be, the by-paths are far worse; therefore keep the way of the commandment, and bravely face its trials.

Another lesson is this:—though we shall be tried, yet faith in God is an available resource at all times. Faith is a shield which you may use for warding off every kind of arrow, yea, even the fiery darts of the great enemy; for this shield cannot be penetrated even by javelins of fire. You cannot be cast into a condition in which faith shall not help you. There is a promise of God suitable for every state, and God has wisdom and skill and love and faithfulness to deliver you out of every possible jeopardy; and therefore you have only to confide in God, and deliverance is sure to come. Mainly note this, that *even when your trouble has been brought upon you by your own fault faith is still available*. When your affliction is evidently a chastisement for grievous transgression, still trust in the Lord. The Lord Jesus prayed for erring Peter that his faith might not fail him: his hope of recovery lay there. Faith under a sense of guilt is one of those noble kinds of faith at which some are staggered. To my mind the faith of a saint is comparatively easy; it is the faith of a sinner that is hard. When you know that you have walked uprightly before God, and have not stained your garments, then you can trust him without difficulty: but, oh, when you have stepped aside, and when at last the heavenly Father makes you smart under his rod,—to cast yourself upon him then is faith indeed. Do not fail to exercise it, for this is the faith which saves. What faith is that which first of all brings men into possession of a good hope but the faith of a sinner? Often in life, when our sinfulness becomes more manifest to us than usual, we shall be driven to that first sort of faith, in which, being unworthy, we trust entirely in pardoning grace. It would be wise always to live by this same faith. If any of you at this time are in great distress, and are conscious that you richly deserve all your troubles because of your folly, still trust in the mercy of the Lord. Do not doubt the Lord your Saviour, for he invites his backsliding children to return unto him. Though you have fallen by your iniquity, yet take with you words and return unto the Lord. May the Holy Spirit give you renewed trust in the Lord, who forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin, and retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Let this stand as our preface, and the whole of the sermon will tend to illustrate it.

We notice:—First, *David's distress*—"David was greatly distressed"; secondly, *David's encouragement*—"David encouraged himself in the Lord his God"; thirdly, *David's enquiry*—"And David enquired at the Lord"; and then, fourthly, *David's answer of peace*: the Lord said, "Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all."

I. First, then, let us look at DAVID'S DISTRESS—"David was greatly distressed." His city was burnt, his wives were gone, the sons and daughters of his comrades were all captive, and little Ziklag, where they had made a home, smoked before them in blackened ruins. The men of war, wounded in heart, mutinied against their leader, and were ready to stone him. David's fortunes were at their lowest ebb. To understand his position we must go a little further back in his history.

David was greatly distressed for *he had been acting without consulting his God*. It was his general habit to wait upon the Lord for direction, for even as a shepherd lad it was his joy to sing, "He leadeth me"; but for once David had gone without leading, and had chosen a bad road. Worn out by the persecution of Saul, in an evil moment his heart failed him, and he said, "I shall surely fall one day by the hand of Saul." This was a dangerous mood. Always be afraid of being afraid. Failing faith means failing strength. Do not regard despondency as merely a loss of joy, view it as draining away your spiritual life. Struggle against it, for it often happens that when faith ebbs sin comes to the flood. He who does not comfortably trust God will soon seek after comfort somewhere else, and David did so: without asking divine direction he fled to the court of the Philistine chieftain Achish, hoping to be quiet there. See what came of it! When he stood among the ashes of Ziklag he began to understand what an evil and bitter thing it is to lean to our own understanding, to forget God who guides us, and to become a law unto ourselves. Perhaps some of you are in distress in the same way: you have chosen your own path, and now you are caught in the tangled bushes which tear your flesh. You have carved for yourselves, and you have cut your own fingers; you have obtained your heart's desire, and while the meat is yet in your mouth a curse has come with it. You say you "did it for the best;" ay, but it has turned out to be for the worst. David never made a heavier rod for himself than when he thought to avoid all further discomfort by leaving his true place.

Worse than this, if worse can be, *David had also followed policy instead of truth*. The Oriental mind was, and probably still is, given to lying. Easterners do not think it wrong to tell an untruth; many do it habitually. Just as an upright merchant in this country would not be suspected of a falsehood, so you would not in the olden time have suspected the average Oriental of ever speaking the truth if he could help it, because he felt that everybody else would deceive him and so he must practise great cunning. The golden rule in David's day was, "Do others, for others will certainly do you." David in his early days was not without the taint of his times. He became the commander of the bodyguard of Achish, king of Gath, and he lived in the royal city. As he found himself rather awkwardly situated in that idolatrous town he said to the king, "If I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them

give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee?" Achish appears to have been almost a convert to the worship of Jehovah, and certainly shines brilliantly in the narrative before us. At David's request he gave him the town of Ziklag. David and his men warred with the various tribes of Canaanites who dwelt in the south of Palestine, and took from them great spoil; but he greatly erred in making Achish believe that he was fighting against Judah. We read, "And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever." This was the result of David's acted and uttered lie, and lest the falsehood should be found out David spared none of those whom he conquered, saying, "Lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David." So that beginning with policy he went on to falsehood, and from one falsehood he was driven to another, and his course became far other than that which a man of God should have pursued. How different was such false conduct from the usual character of the man who said, "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." See the fruit of his falsehood! Ziklag is burned with fire: his wives are captives; and his men speak of stoning him. If you and I ever get away from living by straightforward truth we shall wander into a maze from which it will be hard to extricate ourselves. We should each feel that we can die but we cannot lie, we can starve but we cannot cheat, we can be ground into the dust but we cannot do an unrighteous thing. If it be so, we may count upon the help of God, and may go bravely on under every difficulty. David had left the highway of righteousness, and was stumbling among the dark mountains of craft and deceit. He was plotting and scheming like the worst of worldlings, and he must be made to see his error, and taught to abhor the way of lying; hence in one moment the Lord launches at him bereavement, plunder, mutiny, danger of life, that he might be driven to his God, and made to hate the way of cunning. What wonder that David was greatly distressed?

Yet was his distress the more severe on another account, for *David had sided with the enemies of the Lord's people*. He had gone to the Philistines, and their prince had said to him, "I will make thee keeper of mine head for ever." Think of David keeping the head of a Philistine! When Achish gathered the Philistine army to battle with Israel, we read with shame, "And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rereward with Achish." How dreadfully troubled David must have felt in this false position. Think of David, who was ordained to be king of Israel, marching his armed band to fight his own countrymen! How gracious was the Lord in bringing him out of that perilous position. The Philistine princes suspected him, as well they might, and said to Achish, "What do these Hebrews here?" They were jealous of the high office to which David had been promoted, and fearful of his turning against them during the fight. "And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with Achish; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us: for

wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" Though the Philistine king, like the true man that he was, smoothed it down, he was forced to send David away. What a relief David must have felt! Well might he pen the words of the hundred and twenty-fourth Psalm, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped." What a horror would have been upon him if he had actually gone with the Philistines to the battle in which Saul and Jonathan were slain. It would have been a stain upon David all his life. The Lord delivered him, but he made him to feel his rod at the same time, for no sooner had David reached Ziklag, than he saw that the hand of the Lord was gone out against him, desolation smoked around him, and we do not marvel that David was greatly distressed.

Picture the position of David, in the centre of his band. He has been driven away by the Philistine lords with words of contempt; his men have been sneered at—"What do these Hebrews here? Is not this David?" When he walked with God he was like a prince, and no man dared to sneer at him, but now he has been flouted by the uncircumcised Philistine, and has been glad to sneak back to his little city, ashamed of himself. It is terrible when a man of God falls into such a position that he gives the enemy opportunity to blaspheme God, and to despise his servant. It is terrible when even worldlings scout the inconsistency of the professed follower of Jesus. "What do these Hebrews here?" is the sarcastic question of the world. "How comes a professing Christian to be acting as we do? Look, he is trying to cultivate our acquaintance, and pass for one of ourselves, and yet he calls himself a servant of God!" They begin to point, as they did at Peter—"Thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth, for thy speech betrayeth thee." "What doest thou here, Elijah?" is the voice which comes from God's mouth, and the lips of his adversaries repeat it. When the child of God feels that he is in that predicament, and in great trouble too, it is not strange that he is greatly distressed.

At the back of this came *bereavement*. His wives were gone. He was a man of a large, affectionate, tender heart, and what grief it must have been to him! Nor was he a solitary mourner; but all those brave fellows who were joined with him were bereaved too. Hark to the common chorus of grief! They weep, until they have no more power to weep. It must have been a dread day for their leader to feel his own personal sorrow merged and drowned in the flood of grief which swept over his companions. As for his worldly possessions, he was now as *poor* as he possibly could be; for all that he had was taken away, and his habitation was burnt with fire, and the rovers were gone he knew not whither. Worst of all, he was now *forsaken* by his followers. Those who had been with him in his worst fortunes now upbraided him with their calamity. Why did he leave the city to go off to help these enemies of the Lord, the uncircumcised Philistines? He might have known better; and they grew indignant, and one said, "Let us stone him;" to which others answered, "Let us do it at once." They were evidently in a great rage. He stands there faint with weeping, a friendless, forsaken

man, with *his very life in danger* from furious mutineers. Do you wonder that it is written, "And David was greatly distressed"? He is surrounded with sorrow; but he has no need to gather ashes as the emblems of his woe; for ashes are everywhere about him, the whole place is smoking. He mourns greatly for his wives, and his soldiers mourn for their children, for they are as if they were slain with the sword. It is a case of deep distress, with this added sting,—that he had brought it upon himself.

There is the picture before you: now let us see a fairer scene as we observe what David did under the circumstances. When he was at his worst he was seen at his best.

II. Secondly, let us consider DAVID'S ENCOURAGEMENT: "*And David encouraged himself.*" That is well, David! He did not at first attempt to encourage anybody else; but he encouraged *himself*. Some of the best talks in the world are those which a man has with himself. He who speaks to everybody except himself is a great fool. I think I hear David say, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I will yet praise him." David encouraged himself. But he encouraged himself "*in the Lord his God,*" namely, in Jehovah. That is the surest way of encouraging yourself. David might have drawn, if he had pleased, a measure of encouragement from those valiant men who joined him just about this particular time; for it happened, according to 1 Chronicles xii. 19-20, that many united with his band at that hour. Let us read the passage. "And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads. As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jedaiel, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host. For at that time day by day there came to David to help him until it was a great host, like the host of God." These new comers had not lost their wives and children, for they had not been in Ziklag; but David did not look round to them and beg them to stand by him, and put down the mutiny. No, he had by this time become sick of men, and weary of trusting to himself. God was beginning to cure his servant by a bitter dose of distress, and the evidence of the cure was that he did not encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Do you not feel a wind from the hills? The air blows strong and fresh from the everlasting mountains, now that the man of God is looking to God alone. Before, David was down there in the valleys, with his policy and his craft, in the stagnant atmosphere of self-trust and worldliness; but now he stands in Ziklag, a friendless man, but free and true. How grand he is amid the ruins! He rises to his full height, while his fortunes fall! He reminds you of his youthful days when he said, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." He is no longer in bondage to craft, but he is a man again, strong in the strength of God; for he casts

himself away from all earthly trusts, and encourages himself in the Lord.

He did not sit down in sullen despair, nor did he think, as Saul did, of resorting to wrong means for help; but he went, sinner as he was, confessing all his wrong doing, straight away to his God, and asked for the priest to come that he might speak with him in the name of the Most High. Brothers and sisters, if you are in trouble, and your trouble is mixed with sin, if you have afflicted yourselves by your backslidings and perversities, nevertheless I pray you look nowhere else for help but to the God whom you have offended. When he lifts his arm, as it were, to execute vengeance, lay hold upon it and he will spare you. Does he not himself say, "Let him lay hold on my strength"? I remember old Master Quarles has a strange picture of one trying to strike another with a flail, and how does the other escape? Why, he runs in and keeps close, and so he is not struck. It is the very thing to do. Close in with God. Cling to him by faith; hold fast by him in hope. Say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Resolve, "I will not let thee go." Guilty as you are, it is good for you to draw nigh unto God.

Let us try to conceive of the way in which David would encourage himself in the Lord his God. Standing amidst those ruins he would say, "Yet the Lord does love me, and I love him. Though I have wandered, yet my heart cannot rest without him. Though I have had but little fellowship with him of late, yet he hath not forgotten to be gracious, nor hath he in anger shut up his bowels of compassion." He would look back upon those happy days when he kept sheep, and sang psalms unto the Lord his God amid the pastures of the wilderness. He would recollect those peaceful hours of happiest communion, and long to have them o'er again. His own psalms would tend to comfort him as he saw how his heart had once been glad. He would say to himself: "My experience of divine love is not a dream, I know it is not a myth or a delusion. I have known the Lord, and I have had near and dear intercourse with him, and I know that he changes not, and therefore he will help me. His mercy endureth for ever. He will put away my transgression." Thus he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

Then he went further, and argued, "Hath not the Lord chosen me? Has he not ordained me to be king in Israel? Did he not send his prophet Samuel, who poured oil upon my head, and said, 'This is he'? Surely the Lord will not change his appointment, or suffer his word to fail. I have been separated from my kinsfolk, and hunted by Saul, and driven from rock to cave and from cave to wilderness, and I have known no rest, and all because I was ordained to be king in Saul's place; surely the Lord will carry out his purpose, and will set me on the throne. He has not chosen, and ordained, and anointed me in mockery."

Brethren, do you need an interpretation of this parable? Can you not see its application to yourselves? Are you not saying, "The Lord called me by his grace, brought me out from my love of the world, and made me a priest and a king unto himself, and can he leave me? Is not the oil of his Spirit still upon me? Can he cast me off? He separated me to himself, and gave me to know that my destiny was not like that of the ungodly world, but that he had ordained me and chosen me to be his servant for ever—will he leave me to perish?"

Shall his enemy rejoice over me?" Thus may you encourage yourself in God.

Then he would go over all the past deliverances which he had experienced. I see the picture which passed like a panorama before David's eye. He saw himself when he slew the lion and the bear. Did God deliver him then, and will he not deliver him now? He pictured himself going out to meet the giant Goliath, with nothing but a sling and a stone, and coming back with the monster's head in his hand; and he argued, "Will he not rescue me now?" He saw himself in the courts of Saul, when the mad king sought to pin him to the wall with a javelin, and he barely escaped. He saw himself let down by the kindness of Michal from the window, when her father sought to slay him in his bed. He saw himself in the cave of Engedi, and upon the tracks of the wild goats, pursued by his remorseless adversary, but always strangely guarded from his cruel hand. He cheers himself, as one had done before him, with the inference, "If the Lord had meant to destroy me, he would not have showed me such things as these."

Come, now, dear children of God, take down your diaries and refer to the days when the Lord helped you again and again. How many times has he blessed you? You could not count them, for God has been so gracious and tender that he has aided you ten thousand times already. Has he changed in love, in faithfulness, in power? God forbid that we should indulge such a wicked thought. He is still the same, and so let us encourage ourselves in him.

"Alas," say you, "I have done wrong." I know you have; but HE has not. If your confidence were in yourself, that wrong of yours might crush your hope; but since your confidence is in God, and he has not changed, why should you fear? "Oh, but I am so sinful." Yes; I know you are, and so you were when he first looked upon you in love. If his love had sought to come to you by the way of merit it never would have reached you; but it comes to you by way of free, rich, sovereign grace, and therefore it will come to you evermore. Do you not feel refreshed this morning as you think of what the Lord has done? and do you not feel that after doing so much it would be wrong now to distrust him? Will you not even now encourage yourself in your God?

Perhaps David at that moment perceived that this crushing blow was sent in infinite tenderness to clean him right out of the condition into which he had fallen. The Lord seems to say to David, "All that you have ever got of Achish is this village of Ziklag, and I have caused it to be burnt up, so that you have nothing left to be a tie between you and Philistia. The princes said, 'Send this fellow away,' and they have sent you away; and now the town that Achish gave you is utterly destroyed; there is no link left between you and the Philistines, and you have come back to your natural standing." The hardest blow that our God ever strikes, if it puts us right and separates us from self and sin, and carnal policy, is a *coup de grace*, a blow of love. If it ends our life of selfishness, and brings us back into the life of trust, it is a blessed blow. When God blesses his people most it is by terrible things in righteousness. He smote David to heal him. He fetched him out from the snare of the Philistine fowler, and delivered

him from the noisome pestilence of heathen association, by a way that brought the tears into his eyes till he had no more power to weep. Now the servant of the Lord begins to see the wonderful hand of God, and he shall yet say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word."

I, the preacher of this hour, beg to bear my little witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days, and when God has seemed most cruel to me he has then been most kind. If there is anything in this world for which I would bless him more than for anything else it is for pain and affliction. I am sure that in these things the richest, tenderest love has been manifested towards me. I pray you, dear friends, if you are at this time very low, and greatly distressed, encourage yourselves in the abundant faithfulness of the God who hides himself. Our Father's wagons rumble most heavily when they are bringing us the richest freight of the bullion of his grace. Love letters from heaven are often sent in black-edged envelopes. The cloud that is black with horror is big with mercy. We may not ask for trouble, but if we were wise we should look upon it as the shadow of an unusually great blessing. Dread the calm, it is often treacherous, and beneath its wing the pestilence is lurking. Fear not the storm, it brings healing in its wings, and when Jesus is with you in the vessel the tempest only hastens the ship to its desired haven. Blessed be the Lord, whose way is in the whirlwind, and who makes the clouds to be the dust of his feet. May some such thoughts as these help you to encourage yourself in God as David did.

III. And now, thirdly, we have DAVID ENQUIRING OF GOD. "And David enquired at the Lord, saying, shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?"

Note well that as soon as David had come to be right with God he longed to know the Lord's mind as to his next action. You and I would have said, "Let us hasten after these marauders; let us not stop an instant, we can pray as we march, or at some other time. Haste! haste! for the lives of our wives and children are at stake." It was a time for hurry if ever there was; but, as the good proverb says, "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey." David wisely stops. "Bring hither the ephod," cries he, and he waits till the oracle answers his enquiries. He will not march till the Lord shall give the word of command. This is well. It is a sweet frame of mind to be in to be brought to feel that you must now wait the Lord's bidding, that your strength is to sit still till God bids you go forward. Oh that we could always keep up this submission of heart! Oh that we never leaned to our own understanding, but trusted solely in God!

Observe, that David takes it for granted that his God is going to help him. He only wants to know how it is to be done. "Shall I pursue? shall I overtake?" When you, my brother, are enquiring of the Lord, do not approach him as if he would not help you, or could hardly be expected to aid you. You would not like your children to ask a favour of you as if they were afraid of their lives to speak to you. I am sure you would not like a dear child, whatever wrong he had been doing, to feel a suspicion of your love, and doubt your willingness to help; for whatever he has done he is your child still. David has encouraged

himself in his God, and he is sure that God is ready to save him; all that he wants to know is how he is himself to act in the business.

It is to be remarked, however, that David does not expect that God is going to help him without his doing his best. He enquires, "Shall I pursue? shall I overtake?" He means to be up and doing. Sad as he is, and faint as he is, he is ready for action. Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads; but angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves, and it is a way which does us double good. It was more for David's benefit that he should himself smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of heaven upon them, and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wage of battle, and be rewarded for the forced march and the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labour to extricate yourself from debt and difficulty, and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites, and then to march after them, as if it all depended upon yourself. There is a God-reliance which arouses all our self-reliance and yokes it to the chariot of providence, making the man ready for action because God is with him.

It is instructive to notice that, although David was thus ready for action, trusting in God, he greatly distrusted his own wisdom; for he asked, "Shall I pursue them?" That man is wise who counts his own wisdom to be folly; and he who lays his judgment down at Jesus' feet, is a man of soundest judgment. He who carries till the divine wisdom shall guide him, he shall be expert and prudent in all things.

David also distrusted his own strength though quite ready to use what he had; for he said, "Shall I overtake?" Can my men march fast enough to overtake these robbers? And what a blessed state of heart that is when we have no strength of our own, but seek unto God! It is good to be insufficient, and to find God all-sufficient. I pause here a minute and pray God ever to keep you and me in just the condition into which he brought his servant David. I do not care so much about his overtaking the robbers, and all that: the glory was to have overtaken his God, and to be waiting at his feet. He could not be brought to this without his city being burnt, without his being bereaved, robbed, and ready to die by the hands of his own warriors; but it was worth all the cost to be brought to rest on the bare arm of God, and to wait in child-like dependence at the great Father's door. Let the proud lift up their heads, but let me rest mine on Jesus' bosom. Let the mighty raise their shields on high; as for me, the Lord is my shield and my defence, and he alone. When I am weak, then I am strong. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." The old song of Hannah is still true,—*"He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."*

IV. We close our sermon with the fourth note, which is a note of jubilate, and praise unto God, who helped his servant,—**DAVID'S ANSWER OF PEACE.** The Lord heard his supplication. He says, "In my distress I cried unto the Lord and he heard me." But mark this, he was not delivered without further trial. David marched with his six hundred men on foot after the foe, with all speed, and the band became so worn and weary

that one-third of them could not ford the brook Besor, which, though usually dry, was probably at that time flowing with a strong stream. Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force. When God means to bless us, he often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task, and the Lord takes away a portion even of the little power we had. Our God does not fill till he has emptied. Two hundred men must be rent away from David's side before God could give him victory, for he meant to have David's whole force to be exactly equal to the four hundred Amalekites who fled, that he might make the victory the more memorable and renowned. Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but know that your sorrow may yet deepen, that you may have all the greater joy by-and-by.

Leaving the two hundred men behind, David dashes ahead, and by forced marches overtakes the enemy ; finds them feasting ; smites them hip and thigh, and destroys them, and takes the spoil, but in such a way that manifestly it was the gift of God. He speaks of the spoil as "That which the Lord hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand." God will help his servants who trust him, but he will have all the honour of the victory. He will deliver them in such a way that they shall lift their psalms and hymns unto God alone, and this shall be the strain : "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. We were unworthy, we were faint, we were distressed, but God has made us more than conquerors through his great love."

David's victory was perfect. We are told over and over again that "David recovered all." Nothing was lost : not a piece of money nor a garment, not an ox nor a sheep, much less a child, or one of woman kind,—"David recovered all." How well the Lord works when he once lays his hand to it. "He will perfect that which concerneth me." Salvation is of the Lord, and it is an everlastingly complete salvation. Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. He will work, and work perfectly, till he shall say, "It is finished." The battle is the Lord's, and his saints shall be more than conquerors.

Not only did God give David complete rescue, but he awarded him great spoil. "And they said, This is David's spoil." David became rich and able to send presents to his friends ; but he was also the better man, the holier man, the stronger man, the more fit to wear that crown which was so soon to adorn his brow. Oh, brothers and sisters, the deeper your trouble the louder will be your song, if you can but trust in God and walk in fellowship with Jesus. Little skiffs that keep near the land carry but small cargoes, and their masters see little save the shore ; but they that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep. It is something to be out on the wide main in a terrific storm, when the ship is tossed to and fro like a ball, when the heavens are mixed up with the ocean, and all is uproar. Then great thunder contends with the roaring of the sea, and the lightning flames are quenched by the boiling of the mighty waves. When you reach the

shore again, you know a gladness which the landsman cannot feel, and you have a tale to tell to your children, and your children's children, of what you have seen in the deep, such as lubberly landsmen scarce can understand. As for those who dwell at ease, what do they see? You who have been in the battle can sing of victory, and, pointing to your experience, can exclaim, "This is David's spoil."

Trust in the Lord your God. Believe also in his Son Jesus. Get rid of sham faith, and really believe. Get rid of a professional faith, and trust in the Lord at all times, about everything. "What, trust him about pounds, shillings, and pence?" Assuredly. I dread the faith that cannot trust God about bread and garments,—it is a lying faith. Depend upon it, that is not the solid, practical faith of Abraham, who trusted God about his tent and his cattle, and about a wife for his son. That faith which made David trust God about the sons and daughters and the spoil, that is the sort of faith for you and for me. If God cannot be trusted about loaves and fishes how shall he be trusted about the things of eternity and the glories which are yet to be revealed? Stay yourself on God with an everyday faith. Faith in God is the exercise of sanctified common sense. Somebody called me "superstitious" for trusting God as to his answering prayer, but I reply that he is superstitious who does *not* trust the living God. He who believes in the power of the greatest of all forces, and trusts in the surest of all truths, is but acting rationally. The purest reason approves reliance upon God. The end shall declare the wisdom of believing God. At the last, when we with all believers shall lift up the great hallelujah unto the Lord God of Israel who reigneth over all things for his people, it shall be known by all that faith is honourable and unbelief contemptible.

God bless you, brethren, and if any of you have never trusted God at all, nor rested in his dear Son, may you be brought to do so at once. May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag, and all your carnal hopes carried away captive, and may you then encourage yourselves in Christ, for he will recover all for you, and give you spoil besides, and there shall be joy and rejoicing. The Lord be with you. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel xxx.

1—25; Psalm cxxiv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—125 (Song II.), 124, 130.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE SWIFTLY RUNNING WORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3RD, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“His word runneth very swiftly.”—Psalm cxlviii. 15.

A WORD is the expression of the mind. What a man has thought may live and die within himself, but when he wishes his thought to live in the outer world he embodies it in a word, and thus his thought is made known. Thought without expression is as an arm unlifted, working nothing though it be the mainspring of action; but according to the ability of the man his thought is carried out into fact if he be able to speak a powerful word of command. Hence, as the garment of thought and the accomplishment of wish, a word is a very important thing.

A word is the manifestation of a man. Dryden says—

“Speech is the light, the morning of the mind;
It spreads the beauteous images abroad,
Which else lie furled and shrouded in the soul.”

“Speak,” said the old philosopher, “that I may see thee.” More of a man is seen in his words than in anything else belonging to him; you may look into his face and be mistaken, you may visit his house and not discover him, you may scan his business and misunderstand him; but if you hear his daily conversation you shall soon know him. The heart babbles out its secret when the tongue is in motion. As the full bucket betrays the water of the well, so is a man discerned by his speech. Thus a word takes a most prominent place in reference to all intelligent beings, and this is peculiarly the case with the Lord our God. God’s word is the manifestation of his secret thought. By it he reveals his decree; by it he manifests his nature; by it he carries out his purpose. “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.” If you wish to know God you must know his word; if you wish to perceive his power you must see how he worketh by his word; if you wish to know his purpose before it is actually brought to pass you can only discover it by his word. When you watch the events of providence you are only observing what the word of God is accomplishing as he sends it forth

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into the world. As he said to his servant **Ezekiel**, so it is : " I am the Lord : I will speak, and the word that I shall speak shall come to pass. According to our text, " He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth his word runneth very swiftly."

The word as it comes from God takes several forms. At first it came forth as a *fat* : " Let it be," and it was. When there were no angels to hear him, when matter did not exist to obey him, when there was nothing but himself, the self-existent One, Jehovah, spake, and the thing which are began to be. Since then he has spoken to his creatures by the word of *command*, which should ever be obeyed ; even as David said, " I will delight myself in thy statutes : I will not forget thy word." The word of the Lord comes forth in the form of a precept from his temple, or a statute from his throne, and we ought most reverently to treasure up every syllable that God speaketh to us in that form ; for we are his servants. He also speaks by way of *teaching*. He instructs us by revealing himself through his word. All true doctrine is the word of God, and is to be devoutly believed. Our prayer should be, " Give me understanding according to thy word." His word is also spoken in the form of *promise*, rich and free and gracious, the word on which his children live. In this form it is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. It flashes forth also like lightning flames in *threatenings*, when God dooms the ungodly or warns them of what shall follow except they repent. Terrible indeed is the word by which justice takes vengeance upon the wicked. But chief of all, and above all is **THE WORD**, of whom John speaketh : " In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God, and the Word was God : the same was in the beginning with God." This is he of whom we read in the Revelation, " He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God." That Word is the incarnation of God, wherein God has been pleased to manifest himself more fully than by all other words or works ; for in his Son we see the brightness of the Father's glory more than in all besides, according to his own testimony, " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The name of God is written in plain letters in the person of Jesus, so that even ignorant men may spell it out when their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit. The person, life, death, resurrection, and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are the Word which speaks out the heart of God ; and in his ministry our Lord set forth the mind of God most fully, even as he said of his disciples, " I have given them thy word." To all these forms of God's word our text may be appropriately applied, for in each case " His word runneth very swiftly."

I shall, first, ask you by the help of God's Holy Spirit to *learn the lesson of the text* ; secondly, *let us look to the particular instances which illustrate the truth of the text* : and then, thirdly, as the Lord shall help us, *let us see what teaching we may individually gather from it for our own cases.*

I. First, **LET US LEARN THE LESSON OF THE TEXT**—" His word runneth very swiftly."

We understand from this sentence, first, that *the word of God which operated of old is operating still.* " By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." But God did not create the world and then leave it, else had it crumbled

back into the nothingness from which it came: "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store." Creation is not like a watch which God has made and wound up, to go by itself; but every movement of every wheel of the machinery of nature is dependent upon the constant outgoing of power through the word of God; for of him and through him are all things, and "by him all things consist." Our wise men are continually talking of the laws of nature, and we know that there are such laws, or, in other words, it is a fact that God usually acts in such and such a way; but to suppose that there is any power in the mere laws of nature is absolutely absurd. You may make laws in your household that things are to be done in such and such a way; but unless somebody carries them out laws are nothing. Locomotives obey certain laws of motion; but without steam to drive them the laws of motion will allow them to rust in the engine-house. There is a law of gravitation; but the force of gravitation comes not from the law, but from God. There is a law of growth; but the power by which plants and animals grow is an energy which flows from God. It may be a fact that the force operates in such and such a manner, as a stream runs in a certain channel; but, as the channel is not the stream, so the rule of nature is not the power of nature. Man lives, and all nature exists, by the word of God, for "none can keep alive his own soul." It is of our Lord that we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "upholding all things by the word of his power." The word of power with which God made the world is pulsing still through space. When we saw the comet the other evening flaming through the sky we saw as much the hand of God as did the angels when for the first time they beheld the morning star heralding the dawn. The light of the stars which you and I have seen so many hundreds of times is as much the result of divine power as if for the first time those lamps of heaven were hung out in the midnight sky. The planets move in their mighty orbits with a force which is new every moment. The Lord of hosts orders their marchings. The fixed stars abide in their places because the hand which placed them in their sphere preserves them in it. Order is the result of the Lord's might constantly put forth, else would all things run into a carnival of chaos, and dissolve into destruction. As the bubble on the breaker bursts and is gone for ever, so were the universe dissolved at once and lost in nothingness wert thou not there, O God! His word still operates and runneth swiftly, even as of old. The heavens and the earth would be dissolved were it not that his word upholds the pillars thereof. Well might they sing of old, "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee."

Let us go a step further: the word of God which operated at the first *is operating still with the same degree of force.* The text saith, "His word *runneth* very swiftly," that is to say, it keeps its ancient pace. It has not begun to slacken its speed, and we know what that was; for "he rode upon a cherub and did fly, yea he did fly upon the wings of the wind." There might be a gradual slackening and decline in the forces of nature if they had been created by God and then set to drift by themselves; but as God is still everywhere present, working in the

heaven and in the earth and in the seas, and in all deep places, and as in everything all power continually proceeds from the hand of God, there is no failure in anything. Creation may, if God so please, wax old as doth a garment; but the hand which created it is as full of power as ever. The sun's light, and all else that is needful for man, will continue according to the divine appointment, and will never be exhausted while the Lord supplies them. If any natural force fails it simply means that the divine power is being withdrawn from that particular form of working; but the word of power is the same. If science could prove that any force is waning we should only believe that God is permitting certain created energies to slacken because he means to bring them to their end, having answered his design by them. Men are ever ready to object to the doctrine of the divine working: "All things continue as they were," they say one day; and then another day they say "All things are declining." Neither declaration is precisely true. There are great changes in the operations of God, but there is no change in the hand that operates; and still to-day, as of old, God speaketh and it is done; he commandeth, and it stands fast. This world shall abide as long as God pleaseth; but when the time shall come he that once spoke to the deeps, and they deluged the world, will call to flames of fire, and the earth shall be wrapped in them, and the works of men that are therein shall be burned up. No palsy has seized upon the eternal arm: the closing scene of the world's story will be as grand as that with which the chapter of creation opened. "He fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding."

Yet it is worthy of notice that the word of God spoken of in the text *operates in a silent manner*. We are told that he sendeth out his word and melteth the ice, the frost, the snow. Did you hear that word? You have seen stern winter yield to the breath of spring, and you believe that the genial change was effected by God's word; but did you hear a whisper? No, and none heard it; for the word of God in nature is the going forth of his silent will. "No speech, no language; their voice is not heard; yet their line has gone out through all the earth." Still it is called his word, and I want you to notice that fact, because you are apt to think that God in the kingdom of his grace is dependent upon men's lips and tongues and words. I tell you that the word of God which returneth not to him void is not the word from my tongue, but the word from his own mind. God can, if he will, speak deep into the human heart without so much as a whisper from the preacher; his word can enter men's souls though not a single sound is heard. We have known instances of persons who when far away from the means of grace have, nevertheless, been reached by the still small voice of the word of God in their spirits, which word "runneth very swiftly." If God uses tongues and voices, as he generally does, let him have all the glory that he is pleased to link his potent word to such a feeble agency; but the secret word of power which runneth swiftly, is entirely independent of sounds and noises, of tongues and ears. This is a fact that should comfort us all, and it should make some of you who have been silent try to speak, since God's blessing does not rest on oratory and talent, and the like. Have you not marked in this house—I speak without egotism—how for more than twenty years the people have come together at every service,

crowding these aisles, and God has saved multitudes of souls? Critics say, "This man is not an orator"; and they say the truth. I have never cultivated the arts of eloquence, or exhibited the elegancies of language. I speak out what I know of God's word, and bear my honest witness to the gospel, in such words as come to hand. The almighty word of God reaches and renews the heart, and the more it is allowed to work in an unencumbered manner, in its own natural simplicity, the more victorious it will be. The word of itself "runneth very swiftly," and carnal wisdom doth but hamper it. Oh to let it lay aside every weight! I could wish that men would take oratory by the ears, and hang it up like a felon; for it has been the plague and curse of the Church of God that men try to speak finely and prettily, garnishing their sentences with poetic flowers, and polishing them with needless elaboration. Preach you the gospel, sir, for that is your business. We are not place-hunters who must please if they would win, but soul-hunters, who seek not to amuse men, but to save them. Tell out God's own word in such words as your heart suggests. Pluck up by the roots the flowers that grow in God's fields, and go not to the conservatory of learning and art to gather your fine posy. God will bless his own word; for it is *his* word which runneth very swiftly.

Yet, note again, according to the text *God's word is most effectual*. This is the meaning of the phrase, it "runneth very swiftly." None can resist it; for God is in it. It is God's will, and when God wills it, what matters it if all creation wills the contrary? "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The will of God would bear all opposers away as with a flood, and sweep them like sear leaves before the tempest. There is little wonder that his word runs very swiftly, for if God wills it, how can it be hindered? As it cannot be prevented altogether, so it cannot even be impeded, if it be the very word of God. There is a word of God which may be hindered: his gospel, as *we* proclaim it, may be resisted and cast aside; but the veritable word of God, the inward word, the secret will of the Highest is not resisted, it sweetly conquereth the human will without violating its free agency, and leads men captive in chains which they do not wish to break: it holds them spell-bound by a force which they delight in, and they yield, charmed by the music of the love of God.

It is glorious to think that God is still operating in the realm of grace as well as of nature by a power which is omnipotent, and *this power runneth very swiftly*. There is no such thing as time with God, to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He may take centuries to accomplish his purposes, but if he wills it, all can be done in an instant. He may lengthen out the drama of providence, even to thousands of years; but this is not for want of power, for when he pleases "he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." God's word is never halt or lame: neither can it be said of him as of the hosts of Pharaoh, that his chariot wheels were taken off so that he drove them heavily. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand." Over your

heads, O mortal men, let the voice of this dread thunder roll,—The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Think not because ye boast of your free agency that this can deprive him of his almightiness: still he doeth as he wills among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Who can stay his hand or say unto him, "What doest thou?" Where the word of a king is there is power, but what is the power of the word of the King of kings? It "runneth very swiftly."

II. Thus I have tried to set forth the general truth, now LET US NOTICE THE PARTICULAR INSTANCES OF IT.

First, God's "word runneth very swiftly" in the matter of *creation*. What saith the first chapter of Genesis about the making or fitting-up of this world? It tells us that in its present condition this world was arranged in six days, and on the seventh day the Lord rested from his work. Was ever such a word as this? Was ever so vast a deed accomplished in such a space of time? It is possible that the creation of the world had taken place long before, for "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but even for that first creation he needed no space of time, for his word could create the universe with a flash. The Lord may have allowed ages upon ages to roll by before he ultimately came forth to perform the last upholstering of it for mankind; yet all was done when he spake. God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He said, "Let there be a firmament," and it was so. He spake into being fish and fowl and beast, and it was so: "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is"; for "his word runneth very swiftly."

We still see in the works of nature the changes which God works. The wind may blow never so fiercely from the north, but when the Lord commands it whirleth about towards the south: the calm may be profound, but almost in an instant the hurricane sweeps and tosses up the mighty waves of the sea. The vast changes which God works in nature are to us gradual in their results, else we should be unprepared for them, and catastrophe would follow catastrophe; but still, as far as God is concerned, he acts instantaneously when he wills and as he wills, and his will in creation is achieved the moment that it comes to be an expressed word.

Look further into the field of *providence*, and see how the word of God has been operating there, and has run very swiftly. Consider his providential *judgments*. God warned men that he would destroy them for their sin: he gave them space for repentance, and sent his servant Noah to be a preacher of righteousness. He made the ark to be a visible sermon to them; but when at last his patience was ended it did not take him long to pull up the sluices from below, and to open the bottles of heaven from above. How speedily did he cover the tops of the mountains with the destroying wave! Peter tells us that by the word of God the world which then was, being overflowed with water, perished. Look further on to the cities of the plain. When they were ripe for destruction, Lot saw the sun rise on Sodom, and all was quiet and still as on this Sabbath morning; but in an instant the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and destroyed it. When the Lord came to blows with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, how thick and fast the strokes came till the proud tyrant's will was broken, and he let the people go. Yes, "His word runneth

very swiftly." Whether it be to turn the river into blood, or cover the land with darkness, or destroy it with hailstones, or to slay all the first-born of Egypt, "His word runneth very swiftly." With a word he slew the hosts of Sennacherib, and stretched rider and horse in the deep sleep of death. His judgments are wonderful. Look at Jerusalem: enquire for the ruins of her temple; see how swiftly God fulfilled his decree of overthrow. Journey to Tyre, or Moab, or Edom; get away to Babylon, and Nineveh; go and search and see where mighty empires once rioted in luxury. He told his prophets that it would be so, and lo! it has come to pass; for "his word runneth very swiftly." Come, behold the works of the Lord; what desolation he hath made in the earth. He breaketh the bow and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire; "for his word runneth very swiftly."

So also has his word run very swiftly when it has been sent in *mercy*. When God has meant to bless men, how swiftly his angels have taken wing to bring the boon from heaven. Think of Israel shut up by the Red Sea, with mountains on either hand. Oh how speedily the Lord descended from on high when he came to the rescue of his people.

"On cherub and on cherubim
Full royally he rode,
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

He divided the Red Sea, and led Israel through it like a flock of sheep in the wilderness, swiftly coming by his word to make a way for them through the heart of the sea. So all through Scripture you will observe that in the afflictions of God's people, they have cried to him, and he has sent his word and healed them. Glory be to the name of our covenant God, in all his works, whether of judgment or of mercy, he tarrieth not for man, but executeth his purpose even as he pleases.

For a moment let us reverently think of THE ESSENTIAL WORD, to whom I referred just now, whose name is to be ever mentioned with deep devotion. How swiftly he ran upon his Father's business. As our poet puts it,—

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste he fled."

The life of Jesus upon earth reached little beyond thirty years, and yet his work was finished ere he left this earth for glory. The redemption of mankind, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the finishing of transgression, the fulfilling of the law,—all was done in a short season. Nay, you must shorten that, because the major part of his life was spent in obscurity, doing doubtless much, but not doing that part of his life-work which is perceptible to us. In some three years or so his Father's public business was all accomplished. With what diligence he wrought! As to the actual atonement, although I conceive it embraced the whole of his life, yet the central part of it lay in his passion and death. In the comet which has lately surprised us, much of the brilliance lies in its streaming tail, but the starry portion, or nucleus, is supposed to be the solid part of it; even so, the reconciling work of Jesus shines from the manger to the garden, and yet the more apparent parts of it are crowded into the few hours between Gethsemane and the cross. In that space was Satan

bruised, death slain, hell vanquished, sin wiped out for ever, the saints redeemed, God glorified, and the earth purchased out of bondage. In a few hours of agony and shame and death our Lord effected all. "His word runneth very swiftly." What a running that was when our Lord came forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoiced as a strong man to run his race. He ran so swiftly for the joy that was set before him, that he sweat, but not such sweat as yours and mine; it was a sweat of blood,—such was the agony with which he ran to achieve the work which his Father had set before him. He was no laggard. Does he not reprove your tardy footsteps and mine that, in so short a space, so grand, so infinite, so eternal a work should have been achieved? Truly he ran "very swiftly."

But now, to leave that point, this is true of the word of God *in the matters of grace*: "His word runneth very swiftly." I shall be sure to have your deep attention if you know the extreme importance of the truth I am about to proclaim, namely, that the word of God when it comes to work effectually upon the hearts of men, is able to accomplish its end very swiftly indeed. I conceive that *conviction* of sin is in many cases, if not in all, commenced in an instant. The unregenerated mind of man is like a flint, and you do not break a flint by degrees: by one blow it is shivered. Here is the mind of man like a dark dungeon: God throws back the shutters, and in streams the daylight at once. Conviction is like a wound: the mighty Spirit draws the great bow, away flies the arrow, and in an instant it has pierced the heart; through coats of mail of prejudice, that barbed shaft has gone and slain sin in the heart of man, and that in a second of time. "His word runneth very swiftly."

I know that God worketh thus in *regeneration*. Regeneration is not a work of years: from the necessity of the case the essential part of it is wrought in an instant. There must be a moment in which a man is dead, and another moment in which he is made alive. There can be no interval in which he is neither dead nor alive. Quickening must be an instantaneous operation. There must either be some life, however feeble, or else the man is dead, and the line between life and death must be narrow as a razor's edge. Though you and I cannot see any sharp line between the two, yet there is such a line. A man is either dead or alive. The quickening of a soul into spiritual life remains a proof that God's word "runneth very swiftly."

So, also, with regard to *justification*. When a man believeth in Jesus Christ he is justified at once. I can show you that this must be so. A man may be guilty or not guilty, but he cannot be anywhere between the two. He may, according to the legal language of Scotland, be in a condition in which the charge is "not proven"; but before God, who needs no proof, a man must either stand condemned or pardoned, and there cannot be an instant between the two. In one moment God says to the guilty, "I forgive you." Pardon is an instantaneous gift. You can be forgiven all your sin in half the tick of a clock, and pass from death to life more swiftly than I can utter the words.

How wonderful it is to see the change which the grace of God makes in the human heart in conversion. A man is not turned round and converted all at once; but the commencement of that turn comes at

some particular moment, and just at that moment it often happens that his most cherished idols come tumbling down; the idolatry of his soul is effectually rebuked. He cannot understand it, but the things he once loved he begins to hate, while the things he hated on a sudden he loves, and there is achieved in him a marvellous change. An objector declared, the other day, that we make out that a character is produced in men in a few hours; that a life-building is run up during a single service. I am not about to deny the charge. The statement is not quite correct, but it will suffice. We have all heard of the minister who visited a dying woman, and was the means of bringing her to a joyful faith in Christ, but before he had left the house she was dead: he was wont to say that he found her in a state of nature, saw her in a state of grace, and left her in a state of glory, and all within an hour. So that we do make much of the power of God to accomplish wonders in a brief space. The new birth is a miracle wrought by the Holy Ghost through the word. It is impossible under any other view of things. If this miracle could be taken away from Christianity, what would remain? Conversion and regeneration remain as the standing phenomena by which Christianity is continually proved to be divine. The word of God upon a sudden transforms the very nature of men, and they enter into a new state of life altogether, out of which there comes a character which glorifies God; the essence of that character is created in an instant; the seed out of which it will all come is implanted at once. "His word runneth very swiftly."

Adoption is also one of these rapid gifts. A man is made a child of God in an instant; for he may *not* be a child of God, and he may be a child of God, but he cannot be half way between: there must be an instant in which adoption is bestowed, and that instant I quote to illustrate the text, "His word runneth very swiftly."

Note again, dear brethren, that this is not only true of salvation at first, but it is true of *the work of grace in the heart all along*. Do you feel dull and heavy this morning? God can revive you in a moment. "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." Have you backslidden like Laodicea? Have you fallen into lukewarmness? "Ah, it will take months," say you, "for me to get back." It need not; for here is Christ's word to Laodicea, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Open the door and let Christ come in and all will be healed. "His word runneth very swiftly." Are you desponding, are you despairing! He can take away your ashes and put upon your head the coronet of beauty in an instant. What said the spouse in the Canticles? "The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." It need not take a long time for you to be refreshed and restored; Jesus can come with the riches of his grace, and straightway make you to rejoice in him. Did not Jesus work immediate cures on the palsied and the lame? Is he not equally mighty to bless? Our churches frequently require backsliders to wait a long time before they can be received; if a brother wanders, the churches generally deliver him for years to Satan, and then, perhaps, try to get him back; but it should not be so. John looked after Peter directly after Peter had

been cursing and swearing and denying his Lord; and Jesus himself said, "Go, tell my disciples and Peter," within three days after Peter had fallen. My Lord's forgiving love runs very swiftly; my Lord's restoring grace is swifter than an eagle's wing.

As it is with individuals so it is with churches. A whole church can be revived on a sudden; nay, not alone a whole church, but a group of churches; nay, not only that; but, if God wills it, all the churches in Christendom may be refreshed with showers of blessing within another week. "His word runneth very swiftly." See how it was at the first. Within a short time after Pentecost all nations had heard the word of God, so that Paul could say, "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Like the coming of the morning, the word of the Lord shone forth under the whole heaven right speedily. It will be so again; but we must first be prepared for it. The vessels must be purged ere the Master can use them in his great work. If God were to use most Christians, and most Christian ministers, in their present condition as instruments with which to accomplish his work, we might pass through centuries of centuries before it would be finished; but he can change all this, and make his servants to be like angels, and his ministers like flames of fire. Many move along in Christ's work at a snail's pace; but if the Lord were to visit the aforesaid trudging fathers, and make them leap like a hart, with intense desire and bravery of faith, and then send his own word by them, what is there to hinder a great revival? Suppose all the church should wake up to-morrow with desires for days of prayer? What is there to prevent God's hearing the united cry of his people? What is there to hinder him from raising up hundreds of ministers to preach with tongues of fire? What is there to prevent missionaries going forth to the utmost ends of the earth? Who can stay his hand when once he maketh bare his arm and cometh forth to the fight? Let us have greater belief in God. We scarcely believe in him now: we are always measuring the balance to the credit of the missionary societies, and counting up the agents. I believe in our excellent societies, but I believe in God over the head of them all. I believe in agencies, modes, systems, methods, but I believe much more in God, who can do far more abundantly than we either ask or think. May the Lord take us out into the deep, and then we shall let down our nets for a draught, and take a great multitude of fish. Alas, now we paddle about near shore, and catch a few shrimps, and boast of our wonderful success.

III. We shall close by noting **WHAT IS THE TEACHING THAT YOU AND I MAY GET OUT OF THIS SUBJECT?** One lesson is this. *The seeking sinner can be saved now.* If he seeks salvation at once he can have it at once. Is there a movement in any mind after God? Dost thou say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father"? Have you got as far as that? How long will it take you to get to your Father? Well, I cannot tell you: it is a long way; but let me whisper in your ear that there is another calculation.—How long will it take your Father to come to you? The parable proceeds to say, "When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran." I cannot guess how fast the old gentleman in the parable could run, for hearts are often stronger than legs; but I know

that he to whom the parable points when he runs is not to be overtaken. If God runs, my brothers and sisters, what a pace must be meant! Sinner, if you are rising to go to him, he runs to meet you. "His word runneth very swiftly."

"Oh, how swift divine compassion
Runs to meet the mourning soul;
And, by words of consolation
Makes the wounded spirit whole!"

We read in the hundred and seventh psalm of those who drew near to the gates of death and in their extremity, at the last gasp, they cried unto the Lord. Immediately we read, "He sent his word and healed them." The cure was as speedy as it was complete. Why, the Lord can outstrip time. Is it not written, "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear"? This beats the telegraph. You get an answer before you send the message; or while you are writing the message here comes the reply. O poor soul, be comforted. You may have immediate pardon, immediate adoption, immediate justification. Mercy cometh in a moment to you, and you may go your way saying, "I have it; I have it: why have I been so long looking about for it, when the word is nigh me, on my lip and in my heart?" God grant you grace to receive at this moment the word which saves the soul.

Another lesson, and that has reference to our work for the souls of others. If God's word runs very swiftly, then *it can even overtake those who run away from it*. Not only can the Lord come quickly to those who seek him, but he can overtake those who hasten away from him. I can see the sheep running away. At what a rate they rush! Sheep never run so fast after the shepherd as away from him: they are nimble enough when once they get through a gap. Away they go! They are over the hill and out of sight in no time. Will the shepherd catch them? That blessed Word who is their shepherd, can he overtake the wanderers? Yes, "His word runneth very swiftly." He can overtake the runaways. If a sheep has reached the brink of a precipice the Great Shepherd runs so swiftly that he can save it even now. I say this to you workers that you may be encouraged to go to sick beds, that you may be encouraged to speak to aged men and women, that you may not think anybody is too far gone for Christ. If it were certain that without conversion a person would be in hell in five minutes it would still be both your duty and your privilege to preach the gospel to him, and to do it believing that in the space of five minutes the grace of God could save him. "Dangerous doctrine," says an objector, "people will be tempted to put off conversion." Alas, if they did not forge an excuse out of this truth they would manufacture it out of another, for when men mean to do wrong any perversion will serve their turn. I cannot deny a truth because wicked men pervert it; that would be ridiculous. A rope is a good thing: would you have us destroy all the ropes in the world because a few madmen hang themselves with them? We will proclaim it to the ends of the earth that the Lord can save at the eleventh hour. It is not too late for any of you, however aged you may be. What if you are to die to-morrow? I have an impression that

some here are not far from their end; yet "His word runneth very swiftly," and even now he can save you. The dying thief forbids the idea that any praying penitent shall apply to Christ and find it too late. Postpone not salvation; but if you have delayed for years, make haste at once, and may God's infinite mercy come to you at the selfsame hour.

I close with this further remark. If you and I, dear friends, are not numbered among the unconverted, but are really saved this morning, and yet we are very heavy of heart, there is comfort here; *the Lord can at once give us joy and peace.* "I have a great trouble," say you; "and if I do not get help by Monday night, I do not know what will become of me." Well, God can deliver you by Monday night,—*"His word runneth very swiftly."* "Oh, but I have a dread upon my heart; and if I do not soon get rid of it, I shall be driven to despair." He can console you at once, for the Comforter is already given. "I should like to come to the communion," says one; "I have not been there for a long time, for I do not feel fit, and I do not think I can be prepared for the solemn service in the short space of one afternoon." Oh, yes, you may; for *"his word runneth very swiftly."* If Jesus wash your feet you shall be clean every whit, and clean at once. He can bear you up to the heights of fellowship, and bring you into very close converse with himself in a moment of time. Limit not the Almighty as to speed: limit him not in any way: with God all things are possible. He can cause your dry rod to bud and blossom, and bear fruit in an hour. Commit yourself to him, and pray him to make you perfect in every good work to do his will; working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, and he can do it, and to him shall be the praise for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxlvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 136, 192.

Some years ago we prepared a large work for use at Family Prayer called "The Interpreter." It is an arrangement of the Scriptures for daily reading, and short comments of our own are added. We are afraid that the present generation of our readers do not know of it. It cost us two years of steady labour, and we should like to see it largely used. It is a fine volume, and if purchased in the best binding it is a family treasure, to be handed down as a heirloom.—C. H. S.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE DOUBLE "COME."

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 10TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come."—
Revelation xxii. 17.

We have open before us the last page of the word of God. The Spirit of God will not dictate a single fresh line of truth. We have come to the last chapter, and very soon we shall reach the Amen. We are also, according to divine revelation, approaching the last page of human history. So short a time will elapse before the present economy shall conclude that the angel saith, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." How shall the book finish? If we have come almost to its last verse, how shall it conclude? If we could have been asked by the great Spirit of God, How shall it close? what would have been our reply? We must certainly have left it entirely to his infinite wisdom; but what suggestions might we have made? Shall it finish with a promise? It is well that it should, and there is the cheering word for the righteous, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." But if we close with comfort for saints, what about the multitude outside? what about the tens of thousands who are perishing? Does not our love to sinners suggest that there should be a word to them? Shall it, then, be a word of threatening, stern and vigorous, to awaken their consciences, and convince them of sin? Here it is: "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Yet one does not like to finish with a sentence of exclusion. The Old Testament closes with the word "curse"; let not the New Testament conclude in the same fashion. What, then, shall it be? Shall the last sentences be full of tender invitation and earnest entreaty to the sinner, bidding him come to Christ and live? Yes, let it be so: and yet shall we forget the Lord himself while we are thinking of the sinner? He has told us that he will come,—should not the very last word of Scripture have a reference to him and to his glorious

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advent? Should not the Spirit at the last, as well as at the first, bear witness to Jesus? Shall not the last word that shall linger in the reader's ear speak of the approaching glory of the Lord? Yes, let it be so; but it would be best of all if we could have a word that would combine the four: a promise to the righteous, a threatening to the wicked, an invitation to the poor and needy, and a welcome to the coming One. Who could devise such a verse? The Holy Ghost is equal to the emergency. He can dictate such a verse: he has dictated it. Here it is in the words of our text: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come." That "Come" is a promise to the righteous, for at the coming of the Lord they shall have their portion and their glory, for "his reward is with him." That "Come" is a word of thunder to the wicked, for when he cometh he shall break them as with a rod of iron; he shall dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. That "Come" is a word of invitation to the sinner: "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And yet it is a welcome to our Well-beloved; for when the Spirit and the bride say "Come," they invite the coming One, the Messiah whose second advent our heart desireth, to whom we cry, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." I rejoice to find my text, set in the closing chapter of Scripture, closing it in such a way as wisdom alone could have dictated, comprehending all the things which are desirable in the *finis* of Holy Writ. Oh for grace to gather from this remarkable portion the instruction which it contains.

"Come," is the word of the Spirit and the bride, and our text urges us to let it be our word, too, if we have ever heard it. "Let him that heareth say, Come." In trying to open up this passage we shall notice, first, that here is a *twofold ministry*,—we are bidden to say, "Come"; but it is in a double sense: we say to Jesus, "Come," and we say to the sinner, "Come." Secondly, we shall notice how *this twofold ministry is secured*,—"the Spirit and the bride say, Come"; this is actually and perpetually done according to the ordinance of God. Then, thirdly, we shall see how *this twofold ministry is to be increased*,—let him that heareth add a new voice to that which is already speaking, and let him say, "Come"! In conclusion, you who are hearing ones shall have *this twofold ministry urged upon you*. May the Spirit of the Lord bless our discourse to him that heareth.

I. First, then, let us consider THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY.

There is in the text a *cry for the coming of the Lord*. If you read the verse in connection with that which goes before it you will be persuaded that the cry of the Spirit and the bride is addressed to the Lord Jesus concerning his second advent. As the echo of the Saviour's previous words, "Behold, I come quickly," the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

This cry is continually going up from the Spirit and from the Church of God; and the more gracious the season the more intense the prayer. Because we have the first-fruits of the Spirit we groan within ourselves for the glorious manifestation of our Lord. Just as the twelve tribes, serving God day and night, looked for the first coming, so ought all the tribes of our Israel, day and night, without ceasing, to wait for the Lord from heaven. We are looking for the blessed hope and the glorious

appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" is the desire of every instructed saint. I shall not go into any details about when he will come: I will not espouse the cause of the pre-millennial or the post-millennial advent; it will suffice me just now to observe that the Redeemer's coming is the desire of the entire church; and "unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." The ministry of prayer for the coming of the Lord ought to grow more and more fervent as the years roll on; even as the watchers look for the morning the more eagerly as the night wears away. Certainly the time draweth nearer, and the event can hardly be far removed; therefore let the prayer be general and eager till our Lord heareth it.

"Hark how thy saints unite their cries,
And pray and wait the general doom!
Come, thou, the soul of all our joys!
Thou, the Desire of Nations, come!"

Let every one that hears the prophecy of our Lord's assured coming join in the prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

But there is a second ministry of the church, which is *the cry for the coming of sinners to Christ*. In this respect "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is a very sad calamity when any church ceases from its mission work; it is clearly out of fellowship with the Spirit of God, and has ceased to work with him. The cry of "Come" should never cease at any time or in any place; but it should be addressed to all men, as we have opportunity. The world should ring with "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus! Come and welcome, sinner, Come." For this purpose the Spirit of God dwells among men, and for this purpose there is a church left on earth; if it were not for this the Holy Ghost might depart, and Jesus Christ might bear his saints away to dwell with him above. The Spirit abides here, and the church abides here, that together they may continually cry, "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

This, then, is the double ministry, and I want you to notice that *the first call is not opposed to the second*. The fact that Christ is coming ought never to make us any the less diligent in pressing sinners to come to Christ. I deeply regret when I see persons so taken up with prophecy that they forget evangelism. Trumpets and vials must not displace the gospel and its invitations. By all means pray fervently for the advent, and search the roll and see what the Spirit saith concerning it; but still look on the world that lieth in the wicked one, and let its sorrows command your tears, let its sins excite your zeal. Go out into the world and cry, "Come," and the Spirit of God will cry with you, and by your cry many shall be brought to Christ that they may live. A desire for the personal coming of the Lord is by no means antagonistic to the resolve to labour on in his absence, in the hope of subduing the world to his gracious reign.

Again, *take heed that the second call never obscures the first*. Albeit we are to seek sinners with all our might, and to compel them to come in to the marriage supper, yet we must not forget whose marriage it is, nor cease to pray for the majestic appearing of our Lord, the Prince of

life. **Despise not prophesying.** Be taken up with evangelical work ; let it fill your heart, and fill your hands, and fill your mouth ; but, at the same time, watch for that sudden appearing which, to many, will be as unwelcome as a thief in the night.

Let the two *comes* leap at the same moment from your heart ; *for they are linked together.* Christ will not come until he hath gathered unto himself an elect company ; therefore, when you and I go forth and say to sinners, "Come," and God blesses us to the bringing of them in, we are doing the best we can to hasten the advent of the Son of man. Jesus will not descend till he hath borne long with the ungodly, until indeed his word shall have been preached throughout all nations for a testimony against them, and then shall the end be. Brethren, the two truths work together as a matter of fact, and we are not to dissociate them. Look for the Lord's coming, and then work towards that coming, by bidding sinners come to Christ and live. To my mind the doctrine of the coming of Christ ought to inflame the zeal of every believer who seeks the conversion of his fellow men, and how can he be a believer if he does not seek this end ? The Lord cometh quickly : O sinner, come quickly to the Lord, or it may be too late for you to come. We who call you may soon be silenced by his advent, and mercy may have no more to say to you. "The oxen and the fatlings are killed, all things are ready, come to the supper before the wrath of the King shall be roused by your delays." We beseech you come at once, for the day of judgment will soon be ushered in.

I am sure that everybody who is eager to save souls will soon be driven to desire the advent. If we vehemently cry "Come" to the ungodly, and see their rejection of the gospel, we shall at times become so cast down that we shall cry, "Come, Lord, and end this dreary age. Men reject and despise thee, and thy servants are distressed : it is time for thee to interpose, for they make void thy law." Go into a heathen land and see their images, and preach to them concerning the true God ; and when they reject your testimony you will be driven to cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." Stand in a Popish country and see them altogether given to their idols, and worshipping crosses and relics, and you will soon cry, "Come, Lord Jesus. Let antichrist be hurled like a millstone into the flood, never to rise again." The vehemence of your desire for the destruction of evil and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ will drive you to that grand hope of the church, and make you cry out for its fulfilment.

There is no need to say more about this twofold ministry ; only let its two parts be evenly balanced ; let there be prayer to our Lord,—*"Come quickly !"* and an equal measure of entreaty to sinners,—*"Come to Christ !"* Blend the two in wise proportion, and set both on fire. Tell of Christ's coming to judgment, and then invite men to come to Christ for mercy. Warn them that he is on the way ; but tell them that he waits to be gracious, and that while he lingers they have space for repentance. You will thus both drive and draw, both convince and comfort, and your testimony will have two hands with which to bear men to their Saviour.

II. And now, secondly, let us note that **THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS SECURED.** According to our text, "The Spirit and the bride say,

"Come." They always do say it, and always will say it till Jesus comes.

The Spirit says it. What a cry must this be which comes up from the Spirit of God himself! Given at Pentecost, he has never returned nor left the church, but he dwells in chosen hearts, as in a temple, even to this day. With groanings that cannot be uttered he maketh intercession for us, and this is one of his intercessions, "Come, Lord Jesus." We are sure that Christ will come, if for no other reason, from this fact,—that the Spirit cries, "Come"; for the Spirit cannot plead in vain. This ministry of the Spirit is in part carried on by the Word of God. This Book tells us that Christ will come, and gives a thousand pleas for the Lord's coming, and for the sinner's coming to him. This is done by the Spirit also in his operations upon the human heart: he bears witness of judgment to come, and he persuades men to come to Jesus. He is always moving men to pray that Christ may come, and moving men to come to Christ. He dwelleth with us, and shall be in us, and in both the senses of the word the Spirit of God is evermore crying, "Come."

This also is certainly fulfilled by *the church* wherever she is a true church. Note, that here she is called "the bride." A bride is one that has been chosen from among others and set apart by love to be specially dear to him who chose her: so is the church chosen by God's eternal election and by the love of Christ, to be Christ's beloved for ever. A bride is one that, being chosen, is espoused. The covenant is an espousal of the church to Christ; and every conversion, every regeneration of each person making up the church, is, so to speak, a renewal of the espousal of the chosen to the bridegroom. A bride, however, is more than espoused, she is expectant of the marriage. It is not long before the wedding-day will come to one who is called "the bride;" and even so it is with the church. She is to-day beloved of Christ, chosen of Christ, espoused of Christ; and the time cometh when the marriage shall be consummated: "Blessed are they that shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb." Joy, joy, joy awaiteth the elect church of Christ. Ere long shall heaven and earth be filled with the splendour of the nuptials of the King of kings, when he shall take to himself his great power and reign, and take to himself his bride, who shall then be called the Lamb's wife. Even to-day the church is the bride of Christ, reserved unto him alone. She hath no head but Christ; she owns no rule and sovereignty but that of Christ. This church, which deserves to be called "the bride," is always fulfilling the double ministry which lies in the cry of "Come." Her prayers rise to heaven incessantly for her Bridegroom's appearing.

"Come, Lord, and tarry not;
Bring the long-look'd-for day;
Oh, why these years of waiting here,
These ages of delay?"

And then she turns round to an ungodly world and she cries, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, let him come." So, you see, the church speaks up to her Lord that she may bring him down, and she speaks down to the world that she may bring sinners up to Christ.

Thus our God secures the ceaseless double ministry; for while the Spirit is upon the earth, and the church is yet among men, the two together will continually say, "Come."

Many things make it certain that the Spirit of God, and the bride of Christ, will always maintain their two-fold ministry. For, first, the sin of man grieves the Holy Spirit and moves him to say, "Come Lord," while he says to sinners, "Turn ye, turn ye, and come to Jesus." The church also is vexed with abounding sin: she is sorrowful to be compelled to dwell in the tents of Kedar, and the wickedness of men makes her cry aloud, "Come, Lord Jesus," while in pity to guilty man she cries, "Come and be cleansed from your iniquities." Thus sin provokes the double cry which will yet secure its overthrow.

The character of the two pleaders guarantees this perpetual ministry; for the Spirit of God is such a lover of holiness that he cannot but cry, "Come, Lord, and end the reign of sin!" He cannot but cry to men, "Haste away from your sins, and come to Jesus." The true bride of Christ also has such a delight in purity that from force of holiness she must evermore cry, "Come, Saviour, and end the reign of evil," and she must cry to men, "Come to Jesus, that you may live by his salvation."

Brethren, the love which the Spirit bears both to Christ and to men, and the love which the church also bears both to Christ and men, are combined in one force, and lead to the one cry. Because of this common love the Spirit and the bride must unitedly say, "Come," in the twofold sense. There is also the desire for Christ's glory which is in the heart of the Spirit of God. He delights to glorify Christ, it is his office so to do, and therefore he never will stay from the double work of crying, "Come, Lord!" and "Come, sinner!" The true church also desires Christ's glory. What a throne she would make for him! What a crown would she put upon his head! Therefore doth she cry, "Come, Lord, and reign!" and then she exhorts sinners to come and submit at his feet. There is also the longing for Christ's presence which the Spirit of God hath, and which the bride hath; for should not the bride long for the coming of the bridegroom? There are secret bonds of unity that bind both the Spirit and the bride to the great Bridegroom, and while there are these bonds we cannot wonder that they unitedly cry, "Come! come!" There is, moreover, before the Spirit's eye, and before the eye of the church, the future victory, the day when all things shall be under the feet of Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. The Spirit worketh to this selfsame end. All his operations of conviction, or regeneration, or comforting tend towards the glorious triumph of the right and the true in the person of Jesus; while the church laughs for joy of heart as she thinks of the splendour of the latter days, and sings like the spirits before the throne in the prospect of the conquest of the world by her glorious Husband. This prospect leads both the Spirit and the bride to say to Christ with groanings, "Come"; and to say to sinners with accents of entreaty, "Come unto him, that he may give you rest."

I think I have sufficiently shown the character of this twofold ministry, and how our God has provided for its continuance.

I want your practical attention, and your prayers, while we are upon the way in which THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS INCREASED.

"Let him that heareth say, Come." The hearing man is to say, "Come," but the unconverted man is not bidden so to do. I want you to notice the gradations. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come"; that is actually done. The man that "heareth" is bidden to say, "Come"; this should be done. But the man who is thirsting is not told to say, "Come." No, he cannot say "Come" till he has first come for himself. The exhortation, then, to say "Come" is only addressed to those who drink of the water of life. You that are not saved cannot invite others. How can you? You do not know the way, you do not know the blessing to be found in that way. A more pitiable being than a man who tries to preach before he is converted I can hardly imagine, and it is lamentable that there are in England hundreds of men ordained to the Christian ministry who themselves do not know what it is to be born again. They are preaching mysteries in which they have no fellowship. This is unhappy work and unlawful work. "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes?" Yet all of you who have really heard the gospel with opened ear, and received the truth of God by faith into your souls, are called upon to cry, "Come." Every man that has really heard and learned the Word of God, is to go forth, and bid others come to Christ.

See, brethren, how this *perpetuates* the cry. I have cried, "Come"; but my voice will be hushed in the grave ere long. Younger men who have heard through my voice, will cry, "Come" when I am silent, and those that hear *them* shall cry, "Come" when that generation shall have passed away. As in the old Greek games the athletes ran with torches, and one handed the light to another, and thus it passed along the line, so is it with us. Each man runneth his race, but he passeth the torch on to another that the light may never go out from generation to generation. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Let the fathers teach the children, and the children their children, and so while the sun and the moon endure let the voice that crieth, "Come" to Christ, go up to heaven, and let the voice that crieth, "Come" to sinners, be heard in the chief places of concourse.

This precept secures the *swelling of the volume* of the cry; for if every man that hears the gospel is to cry, "Come," then there will be more voices and yet more. What a feeble few they were who stood up at Pentecost, and by the mouth of Peter began to say, "Come." When each man went out to preach, though they spoke in all kinds of voices, they were but a few that said, "Come"; but ere the sun went down there were three thousand baptized into Christ, every one ready to say, "Come." Ere centuries had passed all Europe had heard the voice of those who said, "Come." "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of them that published it." If at this time we could only arouse all that hear the gospel to say, "Come," what a chorus it would be! All the world would hear it. If all who go down to the sea in ships knew the Lord, and would say, "Come"; ay, if every Christian traveller would take care to proclaim the gospel wherever he went, what holy voices would be heard in nations that as yet are ignorant of Christ! The volume swells, the sound rolls like thunder along the heavens when all that hear it say, "Come."

And how the force of it is strengthened! When one man saith

"Come," and tells out the gospel tale, men may doubt it. Another steps in and says, "Come," and in the mouth of two witnesses the whole shall be established. If another and another shall say, "Come," if each one shall bear witness to the sweetness and the love of Christ, many will be driven to Christ by the power of such repeated testimonies. There is a young man whose sister has been saved; he laughs at her. His mother is converted; he smiles at her. His father is converted; he begins to think. His brother is converted,—one after another, all in the house are renewed. They all beseech him; they pray for him; they tell him the way of salvation, and at last he must yield. When so many surround him the testimony is so strengthened that the Spirit of God blesses it to his conversion.

Consider, moreover, that not only does the testimony gain in strength, but the *adaptation* of it is remarkable. I may preach as long as I live, and I shall never do good to certain of you. It may be that I am not the man that God is likely to bless to certain peculiar persons. But if all that hear me would say Come, some man among you would fit them, or some woman at least would reach their case. If all would say Come, though the sinner is like leviathan, some weak place in his scales would be found out, and the sword of the gospel would come at him. The *adaptation* of the testimony is half the battle. Thus, dear friends, you see that there are great reasons why every one that heareth should say "Come."

Then would the word *travel into strange places*. The waiter at the inn and the sergeant at the barracks would become a blessing. The warder of the jail would bear the gospel to his prisoners; the nurse in the hospital would speak of Jesus to the sick. Places that never will be reached by the most earnest city missionaries or ministers, will be open to the church, if every one that heareth will say "Come." Down in the bowels of the earth the miners sing and praise God when their fellow miner tells of Christ. In the palace Christ is made known when the humble porter at the gate talks of Jesus. Every place would be accessible to the gospel if all who heard it would say, "Come." We should then be as irresistible as the locusts when they go forth in bands. I have seen those creatures invade a land in swarms. They climb up the walls and down them, they march across the roads and pass over the rivers, and none can stand against them. If once the church of Christ were full of the Spirit of God, and all that heard the gospel would say, "Come," we should be perfectly irresistible. The Spirit of God being with us, nation after nation would yield, Popery would be swept away, and errors would vanish; but because we forget this command, therefore the church languisheth, the darkness thickens, and the gloom threatens to deepen into everlasting night. In all this I fall back upon the divine guarantee in the first part of the text, "The Spirit and the bride say, Come"; but, oh, that God would move his entire church to fulfil her mission, and cause every one of her members to say, "Come!"

IV. I may not linger longer over this, for I must advance to the fourth part, which is the most practical. This is my point: THIS TWOFOLD MINISTRY IS URGED UPON ALL WHO HAVE HEARD THE WORD OF GOD. I will leave the point of saying "Come, Lord Jesus" till the close of the sermon, and as it is not easy to ride upon two horses at once, I will keep

to that part of our ministry which consists in bidding the thirsting ones come to Jesus.

First, dear brother, dear sister, you who have with the ear of your inner nature heard the word of God, you are called to cry to others, "Come to Christ." You are called to this work by an *obligation*—the fact that you have received a very gracious privilege. Somebody else brought the gospel to you, for faith cometh by hearing, and you heard the report, and therefore you live. Are you not under a moral obligation to carry the gospel to others that they also may hear it and be saved? Remember how many lived and died to bring you the gospel. Had it not been for men who burned at the stake, there might have been no gospel preaching in England; had it not been for those near and dear to you who loved you, and prayed for you, and wrestled for your salvation, you might have been in the midst of gospel light, and yet never have seen a ray of it. Are you not a debtor henceforth to all around you? Ought you not to repay your debt by labouring for others as others laboured for you?

Recollect, dear hearers, though it is no privilege to listen to my voice, yet it is a great privilege to hear the gospel. Prophets and kings desired it, but they heard it not. The clear manifestation of the glory of God in the person of Christ was known to none in old time as it is to you. The very least in the kingdom of heaven enjoys privileges greater than any of those who lived under the legal dispensation. Are you not grateful for this? Will you deny to the next generation the light which your fathers preserved for you? Above all, recollect that your ears have been opened by an act of sovereign grace. You might have been left as thousands are, to hear and not to hear; to listen to a voice, but not to perceive its meaning. But the Eternal Spirit, in the sovereignty of his grace, has visited you and given you a new life, and with it all the privileges of the children of God. Can you be indifferent to this? Will you not feel that now the precious seed must be scattered by your hand in the broad furrows of the world, out of gratitude to another hand that first gave the seed to you, and made it take root in the garden of your heart? Here, then, is your obligation.

Now, listen to your *commission*—"Let him that heareth say, Come." A believer preaching in the street was accosted by a gentleman who had been ordained to the ministry. Hands which belonged to arms decorated with lawn sleeves had been laid upon this gentleman's consecrated pate, and he was thereby made into an authorized minister. A wonderful thing this! How is it that those of us who were never the subjects of this solemn imposition manage to win souls for Christ? However, this man preaching the gospel in the street was stopped and asked by this successor of the apostles what right he had to preach; and he was not slow to give an answer. The preacher quoted this text—"Let him that heareth say, Come." "I have heard the gospel," said he, "in my own soul, and that is my permission to go and preach it, and I shall not be stopped by you." You who preach the gospel in the streets are often called lay preachers: but indeed you are as much God's clergy as any others: for the apostle Peter distinctly calls the whole church, or, if you please, the mere laity, God's heritage, or in the Greek, God's *cleros*, in that memorable verse addressed

to ministers, which warns them against being "lords over God's clergy." All of you who believe in Jesus are God's clergy, and are authorized to speak the word in some form or other. Yea, the women have their places, even though they are forbidden to preach in the public assembly, there are times when they may address their own sex and others, much to the glory of God. Let them speak without fear, as often as God gives them opportunity, in their own modest, affectionate way. Let them tell of Jesus and his love. Somehow or other you are all to say, "Come," whether you be men or women, ignorant or learned, and here is your permit for doing it: "Let him that heareth say, Come."

But this verse is more than a permission, it is a commission; it means that the hearing man ought to speak, and this he should do personally. The text does not say, "Let *them* that hear say, Come," for what is everybody's business is nobody's business; but "Let *him* that heareth say Come"—that is to say,—each man who knows the gospel in his heart is bound to say, "Come." When is he bound to say it? Why, now, at once. Let him that heareth say, "Come," upon the first opportunity that presents itself. And when is he to leave off saying it? Never at all. Let him that heareth still say, "Come." Let him begin to say it as soon as he has heard it, let him keep on saying it as long as he lives.

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

"Happy, if with my latest breath
I may but gasp his name;
Preach him to all, and cry in death,
'Behold, behold the Lamb!'"

This is your commission; mind that you attend to it. O ye commissioned officers of Christ, see that ye sound aloud your Master's word.

Next, dear brethren, attend to this ministry, not only because you are under obligation to do it, and commissioned to do it, but because you are *qualified* to do it. "How?" say you. Why, your qualification is this,—that you have heard. A man can tell what he has heard. It has been thought by some that the qualification for preaching the gospel is great power of thought. Press your fingers upon your brow and fetch the doctrine out! Think on as hard as you can till you have brewed a new gospel. Produce a new gospel every six weeks. Ay, but that is not so, else were preachers few indeed. If you want a servant to answer the door for you who is never to come in and tell you who calls, but who is to answer the door according to her own sense and wit, you will have to pick a long while before you find such a person. But if all you want is one who will tell you what is said, and then go and say to the person at the door what you tell her, you can find such a maid pretty soon. This last is the true idea of a preacher; he is to say what God says to him, and he must not go any further. If it is so said in the word of God let him repeat it. This makes preaching a humbler work than some think it, and yet a diviner power by far. We do not believe in the cry, "Every man his own saviour"; but we speak of the good old way, and of the only way. Yes, brethren, you are qualified to say "Come"

to others because you have heard a voice saying "Come" in your own soul.

The text saith not, "Let him that has heard," but, "him that heareth,"—that is to say, let the man who is still hearing the voice of God speak. Hear, and then tell what you hear. I have seen pictures of a pope which represent him with a dove sitting upon his shoulder,—insinuating that he receives divine intimations. I am afraid that the bird is a raven in the case of these so-called heads of the church; but in the case of humble believers, the Spirit is present revealing Christ to the heart, and that which is revealed is to be spoken by us. There is your qualification; you have proved the truth of God in your own soul, and so can speak experimentally; you have found Christ; you have drunk the living water, and you can say, "Come." I wanted a drink one day in a thirsty place in Italy, and by the coachman's help I asked at a house for water. The owner of the house was busy and did not come to show me where the water could be found; but he sent a girl with me; she was very little, but she was quite big enough, for she led the way to a well, and I was soon refreshed. She had not to make a well, but only to point it out, and therefore her youth was no disadvantage. We have not to invent salvation, but to tell of it; and therefore you who are but babes in grace can perform the work. You have heard the voice of Jesus say, "Stoop down, and drink, and live": go forth and echo that voice till thousands quench their thirst.

Your *message* is a very simple one: "Let him that heareth say"—a long and difficult sentence in Latin? No. Is he to repeat a very complicated piece of Miltonic blank verse? No. "Let him that heareth say, *Come*." "I can say that," says somebody. Mind you do, brother. Just go and tell people that Jesus died; tell them that "whosoever believeth in him is not condemned." Do not be too long over it, it is only one word, you know: "Let him that heareth say, *Come*." Be very earnest about it. There are many ways of saying it—mind you say it in the best possible manner. And then, as the message is very short, repeat it often:—

"Tell me the story often,
For I forget it soon."

Tell it over and over again, since it is all in one word, "Come." Mind you do not add anything else to it. Do not tell them to bring a price; do not tell them to prepare themselves, and to do this or that; but just say, "Come, Come, Come away from yourselves, Come away from your sins, Come away from your righteousness. Come to Jesus, Come to Jesus, sinner, Come!" It is a very short message.

And so I conclude by saying, *Take care to recollect that yours is a two-fold ministry*, and so when you have said "Come" to the sinner, mind you back it all up with prayer. Go home and say, "Lord, come to these poor sinners by thy grace: Lord, come, I pray thee, come, that this poor work of mine may be ended, because a greater work shall be accomplished by thy coming." Let your heart cry to your Lord, "Come;" for then you will not be engrossed with the world. No man will be anxious for Christ to come while he has everything he wants here below, and is quite satisfied with it. The miser and the voluptuary do not want the Lord to come: they are so glued to this world that they

dread anything that might change their relation to it. You must set loose by the world, or you cannot sincerely say to Jesus, "Come," and that is the very spirit of an earnest worker.

You must say, "Come," because you are ready to welcome Christ: that is the way in which to preach the gospel. I have no right to preach a sermon which I should be ashamed for Christ to hear. You and I ought so live that if our Lord were to come we should not be afraid, but should just go on doing what we have in hand. We ought to live so that if it were a part of the programme that Christ would come at twelve o'clock, we should finish life beautifully at that very hour, and look at the great Judge, and rejoice to appear before him. This is the spirit in which to go on saying "Come" to sinners. Hear the wheels of your Master's chariot behind you, then you will not be dull in preaching the gospel. Feel that men will soon have to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, then you will not be cold in your delivery. Expect that very soon you, too, must give in your account before the great white throne, and even think you see it, and see yourself and your hearers standing before it; then will you preach as though you ne'er might preach again, a dying man to dying men, and so the "Come" of prayer will help you when you deliver the "Come" of invitation, and you will be enabled to make full proof of your ministry.

I must add how pleased I was when I was seeing applicants who wished to join the church, to see that God is blessing many of you in the conversion of souls. One or two of the number were converted under my ministry out of some fifteen or sixteen; but the most of them were under your ministries: one and another of my beloved members had brought others to Jesus. I noticed four little rooms in and about Berrymondsey to each of which God had been pleased to give conversions through prayer-meetings, or the preaching of certain younger brethren. I am right glad of that, and I wish we had hundreds of such room and cottage meetings. This big city of London will never be evangelized by our great assemblies. If all the chapels were filled, which they are not, and if all the churches were filled, which they certainly are not, then a large proportion of the people could not get in. But, alas, they do not come to worship: they will not come. I do not think they understand some of my brethren, for they talk too grandly: some ministers have not learned to talk English, they speak a kind of French-Latin-English: it is not the Saxon English which the people know; and as they do not understand what is preached they do not care to come. The way to get at the masses is to reach them by twos and threes—I am sure of it. Get them into your houses, talk about Jesus Christ in your parlours, in your kitchens, in your bed-chambers, in the corners of the streets, anywhere. I am so glad that very many of you do so; go on and prosper. It will not matter whether I live or die if you all become ministers. Would God that all the Lord's servants were prophets. May every one of you live to win souls. "Let him that heareth say, Come." God help you to do it, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Revelation xxii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—307, 343, 509.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FAITH: WHAT IS IT? HOW CAN IT BE OBTAINED?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“By grace are ye saved through faith.”—Ephesians ii. 8.

I MEAN to dwell mainly upon that expression, “Through faith.” I call attention, however, first of all, to the fountain head of our salvation, which is the grace of God. “By grace are ye saved.” Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them, or that ever can be in them, that they are saved; but because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God. Tarry a moment, then, at the well-head. Behold the pure river of water of life as it proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can fathom it? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite. God is full of love, for “God is love”; God is full of goodness, and the very name “God” is but short for “good.” Unbounded goodness and love enter into the very essence of the Godhead. It is because “his mercy endureth for ever” that men are not destroyed; because “his compassions fail not” that sinners are brought to himself and forgiven. Right well remember this, for else you may fall into error by fixing your minds so much upon the faith which is the channel of salvation as to forget the grace which is the fountain and source even of faith itself. Faith is the work of God’s grace in us. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost. “No man cometh unto me,” saith Christ, “except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” So that faith, which is coming to Christ, is the result of divine drawing. Grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation, and faith, important as it is, is only an important part of the machinery which grace employs. We are saved “through faith,” but it is “by grace.” Sound forth those words as with the archangel’s trumpet: “By grace are ye saved.”

Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit-pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream: faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men. It is a great pity when the aqueduct is broken. It is a sad sight to see around

No. 1,609.

There are many more aqueducts which no longer convey water into the city, because the arches are broken and the marvellous structures are in ruins. The aqueduct must be kept entire to convey the current; and even so, faith must be true and sound, leading right up to God and coming right down to ourselves, that it may become a serviceable channel of mercy to our souls. Still, I again remind you that faith is the channel, it is not the fountain head, and we must not look so much to it as to exist above the divine source of all blessing which lies in the grace of God. Never make a Christ out of your faith, nor think of it as if it were the independent source of your salvation. Our life is found in "looking unto Jesus," not in looking to our own faith. By faith all things become possible to us; yet the power is not in the faith, but in the God upon whom faith relies. Grace is the foundation, and faith is the chain by which the carriage of the soul is attached to the great motive power. The righteousness of faith is not the moral excellence of faith, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ which faith grasps and appropriates. The peace within the soul is not derived from the contemplation of our own faith, but it comes to us from him who is our peace, the hem of whose garment faith touches, and virtue comes out of him into the soul.

However, it is a very important thing that we look well to the channel, and therefore at this time we will consider it, as God, the Holy Ghost, shall enable us. Faith, what is it? Faith, why is it selected as the channel of blessing? Faith, how can it be obtained and increased?

I. FAITH, WHAT IS IT? What is this faith concerning which it is said, "By grace are ye saved through faith"? There are many descriptions of faith, but almost all the definitions I have met with have made me understand it less than I did before I saw them. The negro said when he read the chapter that he would confound it, and it is very likely that he did so, though he meant to expound it. So, brethren, we may explain faith till nobody understands it. I hope I shall not be guilty of that fault. Faith is the simplest of all things, and perhaps because of its simplicity it is the more difficult to explain.

What is faith? *It is made up of three things—knowledge, belief, and trust.* Knowledge comes first. Romanist divines hold that a man can believe what he does not know. Perhaps a Romanist can; but I cannot. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" I want to be informed of a fact before I can possibly believe it. I believe this, I believe that; but I cannot say that I believe a great many things of which I have never heard. "Faith cometh by hearing": we must first hear, in order that we may know what is to be believed. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." A measure of knowledge is essential to faith: hence the importance of getting knowledge. "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live,"—such was the word of the ancient prophet, and it is the word of the gospel still. Search the Scriptures and learn what the Holy Spirit teacheth concerning Christ and his salvation. Seek to know God,—"that God is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." May he give you "the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." Know the gospel: know what the good news how it talks of free forgiveness, and of change of heart, of adoption

into the family of God, and of countless other blessings. Know God, know his gospel, and know especially Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Saviour of men, united to us by his human nature, and united to God, seeing he is divine, and thus able to act as mediator between God and man, able to lay his hand upon both, and to be the connecting link between the sinner and the Judge of all the earth. Endeavour to know more and more of Christ. After Paul had been converted more than twenty years, he tells the Philippians that he desired to know Christ; and depend upon it, the more we know of Jesus, the more we shall wish to know of him, that so our faith in him may increase. Endeavour especially to know the doctrine of the sacrifice of Christ, for that is the centre of the target at which faith aims; that is the point upon which saving faith mainly fixes itself, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Know that he was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." Drink deep into the doctrine of the substitutionary work of Christ, for therein lies the sweetest possible comfort to the guilty sons of men, since the Lord "made him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Faith, then, begins with knowledge; hence the value of being taught in divine truth; for to know Christ is life eternal.

Then the mind goes on to *believe* that these things are true. The soul believes that God is, and that he hears the cries of sincere hearts; that the gospel is from God; that justification by faith is the grand truth that God hath revealed in these last days by his Spirit more clearly than before. Then the heart believes that Jesus is verily and in truth our God and Saviour, the Redeemer of men, the prophet, priest, and king unto his people. Dear hearers, I pray that you may at once come to this. Get firmly to believe that "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanseth us from all sin"; that his sacrifice is complete and fully accepted of God on man's behalf, so that he that believeth on Jesus is not condemned. So far you have made an advance towards faith, and one more ingredient is needed to complete it, which is *trust*. Commit yourself to the merciful God; rest your hope on the gracious gospel; trust your soul on the dying and living Saviour; wash away your sins in the atoning blood; accept his perfect righteousness, and all is well. Trust is the life-blood of faith: there is no saving faith without it. The Puritans were accustomed to explain faith by the word "recumbency." You know what it means. You see me leaning upon this rail, leaning with all my weight upon it; even thus lean upon Christ. It would be a better illustration still if I were to stretch myself at full length and rest my whole person upon a rock, lying flat upon it. Fall flat upon Christ. Cast yourself upon him, rest in him, commit yourself to him. That done, you have exercised saving faith. Faith is not a blind thing; for faith begins with knowledge. It is not a speculative thing; for faith believes facts of which it is sure. It is not an unpractical, dreamy thing; for faith trusts, and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Faith *ventures* its all upon the truth of God; it is not a pleasant word to use, but the poet employed it, and it suggests my meaning:

"Venture on him, venture wholly;
Let no other trust intrude."

That is one way of describing what faith is : I wonder whether I have "confounded" it already.

Let me try again. *Faith is believing that Christ is what he is said to be, that he will do what he has promised to do, and expecting this of him.* The Scriptures speak of Jesus Christ as being God, God in human flesh ; as being perfect in his character ; as being made a sin-offering on our behalf ; as bearing sin in his own body on the tree. The Scripture speaks of him as having finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The Scriptures further tell us that he "rose again," that he "ever liveth to make intercession for us," that he has gone up into the glory, and has taken possession of heaven on the behalf of his people, and that he will shortly come again "to judge the world in righteousness and his people with equity." We are most firmly to believe that it is even so ; for this is the testimony of God the Father when he said, "This is my beloved Son ; hear ye him." This also is testified by God the Holy Spirit ; for the Spirit has borne witness to Christ, both by the Word and by divers miracles, and by his working in the hearts of men. We are to believe this testimony to be true.

Faith also believes that Christ will do what he has promised ; that if he has promised to cast out none that come to him, it is certain that he will not cast us out if we come to him. Faith believes that if Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," it must be true ; and if we get this living water from Christ it will abide in us, and will well up within us in streams of holy life. Whatever Christ has promised to do he will do, and we must believe this so as to look for pardon, justification, preservation, and eternal glory from his hands, according as he has promised.

Then comes the next necessary step. Jesus is what he is said to be, Jesus will do what he says he will do ; therefore we must each one *trust him*, saying, "He will be to me what he says he is, and he will do to me what he has promised to do ; I leave myself in the hands of him who is appointed to save, that he may save me. I rest upon his promise that he will do even as he has said." This is a saving faith, and he that hath it hath everlasting life. Whatever his dangers and difficulties, whatever his darkness and depression, whatever his infirmities and sins, he that believeth thus on Christ Jesus is not condemned, and shall never come into condemnation. May that explanation be of some service. I trust it may be used by the Spirit of God.

But now I thought, as it was a very hot and heavy morning, that I had better give you a number of illustrations, lest anybody should be inclined to go to sleep. If anybody should be drowsy, will his next neighbour not nudge him a little by accident ; for it may be as well while we are here to be awake, especially with such a subject on hand as this. The illustrations will be such as have been commonly used, and perhaps I may be able to give one or two of my own. Faith exists in various degrees, according to the amount of knowledge, or other cause. Sometimes faith is little more than a simple *clinging* to Christ : a sense of dependence, and a willingness so to depend. When you are down at the seaside, as we might all of us wish to be, you will see the limpet sticking to the rock ; you walk with a soft tread up to the rock with

your walking stick and strike the limpet with a rapid blow, and off he comes. Try the next limpet in that way. You have given him warning; he heard the blow with which you struck his neighbour, and he clings with all his might. You will never get him off; not you! Strike, and strike again, but you may as soon break the rock. Our little friend, the limpet, does not know much, but he clings. He cannot tell us much about what he is clinging to, he is not acquainted with the geological formation of the rock, but he clings. He has found something to cling to, that is his little bit of knowledge, and he uses it by clinging to the rock of his salvation; it is the limpet's life to cling. Thousands of God's people have no more faith than this; they know enough to cling to Jesus with all their heart and soul, and this suffices. Jesus Christ is to them a Saviour strong and mighty, and like a rock immovable and immutable; they cleave to him for dear life, and this clinging saves them.

God gives to his people the propensity to cling. Look at the sweet pea which grows in your garden. Perhaps it has fallen down upon the gravel walk. Lift it up against the laurel or the trellis, or put a stick near it, and it catches hold directly, because there are little hooks ready prepared with which it grasps anything which comes in its way: it was meant to grow upwards, and so it is provided with tendrils. Every child of God has his tendrils about him—thoughts, and desires, and hopes with which he hooks on to Christ and the promise. Though this is a very simple sort of faith, it is a very complete and effectual form of it, and, in fact, it is the heart of all faith, and that to which we are often driven when we are in deep trouble, or when our mind is somewhat bemuddled by our being sickly or depressed in spirit. We can cling when we can do nothing else, and that is the very soul of faith. O poor heart, if thou dost not yet know as much about the gospel as we could wish thee to know, cling to what thou dost know. If as yet thou art only like a lamb that wades a little into the river of life, and not like leviathan who stirs the mighty deep to the bottom, yet drink; for it is drinking, and not diving, that will save thee. Cling, then! Cling to Jesus; for that is faith.

Another form of faith is this, in which a man depends upon another from a knowledge of the superiority of that other, and *follows* him. I do not think the limpet knows much about the rock, but in this next phase of faith there is more knowledge. A blind man trusts himself with his guide because he knows that his friend can see, and trusting, he walks where his guide conducts him. If the poor man is born blind he does not know what sight is; but he knows that there is such a thing as sight, and that it is possessed by his friend, and therefore he freely puts his hand into the hand of the seeing one, and follows his leadership. This is as good an image of faith as well can be; we know that Jesus has about him merit, and power, and blessing which we do not possess, and therefore we gladly trust ourselves to him, and he never betrays our confidence.

Every boy that goes to school has to exert faith while *learning*. His schoolmaster teaches him geography, and instructs him as to the form of the earth, and the existence of certain great cities and empires. The boy does not himself know that these things are true, except that he believes

his teacher, and the books put into his hands. That is what you will have to do with Christ if you are to be saved—you must just know because he tells you, and believe because he assures you it is even so, and trust yourself with him because he promises you that salvation will be the result. Almost all that you and I know has come to us by faith. A scientific discovery has been made, and we are sure of it. On what ground do we believe it? On the authority of certain well-known men of learning, whose repute is established. We have never made or seen their experiments, but we believe their witness. Just so you are to do with regard to Christ: because he teaches you certain truths you are to be his disciple, and believe his words, and trust yourself with him. He is infinitely superior to you, and presents himself to your confidence as your Master and Lord. If you will receive him and his words you shall be saved.

Another and a higher form of faith is that faith which *grows out of love*. Why does a boy trust his father? You and I know a little more about his father than he does, and we do not rely upon him quite so implicitly; but the reason why the child trusts his father is because he loves him. Blessed and happy are they who have a sweet faith in Jesus, intertwined with deep affection for him. They are charmed with his character and delighted with his mission, they are carried away by the lovingkindness that he has manifested, and now they cannot help trusting him because they so much admire, revere, and love him. It is hard to make you doubt a person whom you love. If you are at last driven to it, then comes the awful passion of jealousy, which is strong as death and cruel as the grave: but till such a crushing of the heart shall come, love is all trustfulness and confidence.

The way of loving trust in the Saviour may thus be illustrated. A lady is the wife of the most eminent physician of the day. She is seized with a dangerous illness, and is smitten down by its power; yet she is wonderfully calm and quiet, for her husband has made this disease his special study, and has healed thousands similarly afflicted. She is not in the least troubled, for she feels perfectly safe in the hands of one so dear to her, in whom skill and love are blended in their highest forms. Her faith is reasonable and natural, her husband from every point of view deserves it of her. This is the kind of faith which the happiest of believers exercise towards Christ. There is no physician like him, none can save as he can; we love him, and he loves us, and therefore we put ourselves into his hands, accept whatever he prescribes, and do whatever he bids. We feel that nothing can be wrongly ordered while he is the director of our affairs, for he loves us too well to let us perish, or suffer a single needless pang.

Faith also *realizes* the presence of the living God and Saviour, and thus it breeds in the soul a beautiful calm and quiet like that which was seen in a little child in the time of tempest. Her mother was alarmed, but the sweet girl was pleased; she clapped her hands with delight. Standing at the window when the flashes came most vividly, she cried in childish accents, "Look, mamma! How beautiful! How beautiful!" Her mother said, "My dear, come away, the lightning is terrible;" but she begged to be allowed to look out and see the lovely light which God was making all over the sky, for she was sure God would

not do his little child any harm. "But hearken to the terrible thunder," said her mother. "Did you not say, mamma, that God was speaking in the thunder?" "Yes," said her trembling parent. "O," said the darling, "how nice it is to hear him. He talks very loud, but I think it is because he wants the deaf people to hear him. Is it not so, mamma?" Thus she went talking on; as merry as a bird was she, for God was real to her, and she trusted him. To her the lightning was God's beautiful light, and the thunder was God's wonderful voice, and she was happy. I dare say her mother knew a good deal about the laws of nature and the energy of electricity; and little was the comfort which her knowledge brought her. The child's knowledge was less showy, but it was far more certain and precious. We are so conceited nowadays that we are too proud to be comforted by self-evident truth, and prefer to make ourselves wretched with questionable theories. Hood sang a deep spiritual truth when he merrily said,

"I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy."

For my own part I would rather be a child again than grow perversely wise. Faith, is to be a child towards Christ, believing in him as a real and present person, at this very moment near us, and ready to bless us. This may seem to be a childish fancy; but it is such childishness are we must all come to if we would be happy in the Lord. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Faith takes Christ at his word, as a child believes his father, and trusts him in all simplicity with past, present, and future. God give us such faith!

A firm form of *faith* arises out of *assured knowledge*; this comes of growth in grace, and is the faith which believes Christ because it knows him, trusts him because it has proved him to be infallibly faithful. This faith asks not for signs and tokens, but bravely believes. Look at the faith of the master mariner—I have often wondered at it. He looses his cable, he steams away from the shore. For days, weeks, or even months he never sees sail or shore, yet on he goes day and night without fear, till one morning he finds himself just opposite to the desired haven towards which he has been steering. How has he found his way over the trackless deep? He has trusted in his compass, his nautical almanack, his glass, and the heavenly bodies, and obeying their guidance, without sighting shore, he has steered so accurately that he has not to change a point to get into port. It is a wonderful thing that sailing without sight. Spiritually it is a blessed thing to leave the shores of sight, and say, "Good-bye to inward feelings, cheering providences, signs, tokens, and so forth: I believe in God, and I steer for heaven straight away." "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed:" to them shall be administered an abundant entrance at the last, and a safe voyage on the way.

This is the faith which makes it easy to *commit our soul and all its eternal interests into the Saviour's keeping*. One man goes to the bank and puts his money into it with a measure of confidence; but another has looked into the bank's accounts, and has been behind the scenes and made sure of its having a large reserve of well invested capital; he puts in his money with the utmost assurance. He knows and is established in his faith, and so he cheerfully commits his all to the bank. Even so, we who know Christ are glad to place our whole being in his hands, knowing that he is able to keep us even unto the end.

God give us more and more of an assured confidence in Jesus until it comes to be an unwavering faith, so that we never doubt, but unquestioningly believe. Look at the ploughman; he labours with his plough in the wintry months, when there is not a bough on the tree nor a bird that sings to cheer him, and after he has ploughed he takes the precious corn from the granary, of which perhaps he hath little enough, and he buries it in the furrows, assured that it will come up again. Because he has seen a harvest fifty times already he looks for another, and in faith he scatters the precious grain. To all appearance, the most absurd thing that ever was done by mortal man is to throw away good corn, burying it in the ground. If you had never seen or heard of its results, it would seem the way of waste and not the work of husbandry; yet the farmer has no doubt, he longs to be allowed to cast away his seed, in faith he even covets fair weather that he may bury his corn; and if you tell him that he is doing an absurd thing, he smiles at your ignorance, and tells you that thus harvests come. This is a fair picture of the faith which grows of experience: it helps us to act in a manner contrary to appearances, it leads us to commit our all to the keeping of Christ, burying our hopes and our very lives with him in joyful confidence that if we be dead with him we shall also live with him. Jesus Christ who *come from the dead* will raise us up through his death unto newness of life, and give us a harvest of joy and peace.

Give up everything into the hand of Christ, and you shall have it back with an abundant increase. May we get strong faith, so that as we have no doubt of the rising and setting of the sun, so we may never doubt the Saviour's working for us in every hour of need. We have already trusted in our Lord, and have never been confounded, therefore let us go on to rely upon him more and more implicitly; for never shall our faith in him surpass the bounds of his deservings. Have faith in God, and then hear Jesus say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

II. Thus far have I done my best to answer what faith is; we shall now enquire, WHY FAITH IS SELECTED AS THE CHANNEL OF SALVATION? "By grace are ye saved *through faith*." It becomes us to be modest in answering such a question, for God's ways are not always to be understood; but, as far as we can tell, faith has been selected as the channel of grace because *there is a natural adaptation* in faith to be used as the receiver. Suppose that I am about to give a poor man an alms: I put it into his hand—why? Well, it would hardly be fitting to put it into his ear, or to lay it upon his foot; the hand seems made on purpose to receive. So faith in the mental body is created on purpose to be a receiver: it is the hand of the man, and there is a fitness in bestowing grace by its means. Do let me put this very plainly. Faith

which receives Christ is as simple an act as when your child receives an apple from you, because you hold it out and promise to give it the apple if it comes for it. The belief and the receiving relate only to an apple, but they make up precisely the same act as the faith which deals with eternal salvation, and what the child's hand is to the apple, that your faith is to the perfect salvation of Christ. The child's hand does not make the apple, nor alter the apple, it only takes it; and faith is chosen by God to be the receiver of salvation, because it does not pretend to make salvation, nor to help in it, but it receives it.

Faith, again, is doubtless selected because *it gives all the glory to God*. It is of faith that it might be by grace, and it is of grace that there may be no boasting; for God cannot endure pride. Paul saith, "Not of works, lest any man should boast." The hand which receives charity does not say, "I am to be thanked for accepting the gift"; that would be absurd. When the hand conveys bread to the mouth it does not say to the body, "Thank me, for I feed you." It is a very simple thing that the hand does, though a very necessary thing; but it never arrogates glory to itself for what it does. So God has selected faith to receive the unspeakable gift of his grace because it cannot take to itself any credit, but must adore the gracious God who is the giver of all good.

Next, God selects faith as the channel of salvation because *it is a sure method, linking man with God*. When man confides in God there is a point of union between them, and that union guarantees blessing. Faith saves us because it makes us cling to God, and so brings us into connection with him. I have used the following illustration before, but I must repeat it, because I cannot think of a better. I am told that years ago above the Falls of Niagara a boat was upset, and two men were being carried down the current, when persons on the shore managed to float a rope out to them, which rope was seized by them both. One of them held fast to it and was safely drawn to the bank; but the other, seeing a great log come floating by, unwisely let go the rope and clung to the log, for it was the bigger thing of the two, and apparently better to cling to. Alas, the log with the man on it, went right over the vast abyss, because there was no union between the log and the shore. The size of the log was no benefit to him who grasped it; it needed a connection with the shore to produce safety. So when a man trusts to his works, or to sacraments, or to anything of that sort, he will not be saved, because there is no junction between him and Christ; but faith, though it may seem to be like a slender cord, is in the hand of the great God on the shore side; infinite power pulls in the connecting line, and thus draws the man from destruction. Oh, the blessedness of faith, because it unites us to God!

Faith is chosen, again, because *it touches the springs of action*. I wonder whether I shall be wrong if I say that we never do anything except through faith of some sort. If I walk across this platform it is because I believe my legs will carry me. A man eats because he believes in the necessity of food. Columbus discovered America because he believed that there was another continent beyond the ocean: many another grand deed has also been born of faith, for faith works wonders. Commoner things are done on the same principle; faith in its natural form is an all-prevailing force. God gives salvation to our faith, because he

has thus touched the secret spring of all our emotions and actions. He has, so to speak, taken possession of the battery, and now he can send the sacred current to every part of our nature. When we believe in Christ, and the heart has come into the possession of God, then are we saved from sin, and are moved towards repentance, holiness, zeal, prayer, consecration, and every other gracious thing.

Faith, again, *has the power of working by love*; it touches the secret spring of the affections, and draws the heart towards God. Faith is an act of the understanding; but it also proceeds from the heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and hence God gives salvation to faith because it resides next door to the affections, and is near akin to love, and love, you know, is that which purifies the soul. Love to God is obedience, love is holiness; to love God and to love man is to be conformed to the image of Christ, and this is salvation.

Moreover, *faith creates peace and joy*; he that hath it rests, and is tranquil, is glad, and joyous; and this is a preparation for heaven. God gives all the heavenly gifts to faith, because faith worketh in us the very life and spirit which are to be eternally manifested in the upper and better world. I have hastened over these points that I might not weary you on a day when, however willing the spirit may be, the flesh is weak.

III. We close with the third point: HOW CAN WE OBTAIN AND INCREASE OUR FAITH? A very earnest question this to many. They say they want to believe but cannot. A great deal of nonsense is talked upon this subject. Let us be practical in our dealing with it. "What am I to do in order to believe?" The shortest way is to believe, and if the Holy Spirit has made you honest and candid, you will believe as soon as the truth is set before you. Anyhow, the gospel command is clear: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

But still, *if you have a difficulty, take it before God in prayer*. Tell the great Father exactly what it is that puzzles you, and beg him by his Holy Spirit to solve the question. If I cannot believe a statement in a book I am glad to enquire of the author what he meant, and if he is a true man his explanation will satisfy me: much more will the divine explanation satisfy the heart of the true seeker. The Lord is willing to make himself known; go to him, and see if it be not so.

Furthermore, if faith seem difficult, it is possible that God the Holy Spirit will enable you to believe if you *hear very frequently and earnestly that which you are commanded to believe*. We believe many things because we have heard them so often. Do you not find it so in common life, that if you hear a thing fifty times a day, at last you come to believe it? Some men have come to believe that which is false by this process: I should not wonder but what God often blesses this method in working faith concerning that which is true, for it is written, "Faith cometh by hearing." If I earnestly and attentively hear the gospel, it may be that one of these days I shall find myself believing that which I hear, through the blessed operation of the Spirit upon my mind.

If that, however, should seem poor advice, I would add next, *consider the testimony of others*. The Samaritans believed because of what the woman told them concerning Jesus. Many of our beliefs arise out of the testimony of others. I believe that there is such a country as Japan: I never saw it, and yet I believe that there is such a place because others

have been there. I believe I shall die: I have never died, but a great many have done so whom I once knew, and I have a conviction that I shall die also; the testimony of many convinces me of this fact. Listen, then, to those who tell you how they were saved, how they were pardoned, how they have been changed in character: if you will but listen you will find that somebody just like yourself has been saved. If you have been a thief, you will find that a thief rejoiced to wash away his sin in the fountain of Christ's blood. You that have been unchaste in life, you will find that men who have fallen that way have been cleansed and changed. If you are in despair, you have only to get among God's people, and enquire a little, and some who have been equally in despair with yourself will tell you how he saved them. As you listen to one after another of those who have tried the word of God, and proved it, the divine Spirit will lead you to believe. Have you not heard of the African who was told by the missionary that water sometimes became so hard that a man could walk on it? He declared that he believed a great many things the missionary had told him; but he never would believe that. When he came to England it came to pass that one frosty day he saw the river frozen, but he would not venture on it. He knew that it was a river, and he was certain that he would be drowned if he ventured upon it. He could not be induced to walk the ice till his friend went upon it; then he was persuaded, and trusted himself where others had ventured. So, mayhap, while you see others believe, and notice their joy and peace, you will yourself be gently led to believe. It is one of God's ways of helping us to faith.

A better plan still is this,—*note the authority upon which you are commanded to believe*, and this will greatly help you. The authority is not mine, or you might well reject it. It is not even the pope's, or you might even reject that. But you are commanded to believe upon the authority of God himself. *He* bids you believe in Jesus Christ, and you must not refuse to obey your Maker. The foreman of a certain works in the north had often heard the gospel, but he was troubled with the fear that he might not come to Christ. His good master one day sent a card round to the works—"Come to my house immediately after work." The foreman appeared at his master's door, and the master came out, and said somewhat roughly, "What do you want, John, troubling me at this time? Work is done, what right have you here?" "Sir," said he, "I had a card from you saying that I was to come after work." "Do you mean to say that merely because you had a card from me you are to come up to my house and call me out after business hours?" "Well, sir," replied the foreman, "I do not understand you, but it seems to me that, as you sent for me, I had a right to come." "Come in, John," said his master, "I have another message that I want to read to you," and he sat down and read these words—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Do you think after such a message from Christ that you can be wrong in going to him?" The poor man saw it all at once, and believed, because he saw that he had good warrant and authority for believing. So have you, poor soul; you have good authority for coming to Christ, for the Lord himself bids you trust him.

If that does not settle you, *think over what it is that you have to*

believe,—that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered in the room and place and stead of men, and is able to save all who trust him. Why, this is the most blessed fact that ever men were told to believe: the most suitable, the most comforting, the most divine truth that ever was set before men. I advise you to think much upon it, and search out the grace and love which it contains. Study the four Evangelists, study Paul's epistles, and then see if the message is not such a credible one that you are forced to believe it.

If that does not do, then *think upon the person of Jesus Christ*—think of who he is and what he did, and where he is now, and what he is now; think often and deeply. When he, even such an one as he, bids you trust him, surely then your heart will be persuaded. For how can you doubt *him*?

If none of these things avail, then there is something wrong about you altogether, and my last word is, *submit yourself to God!* May the Spirit of God take away your enmity and make you yield. You are a rebel, a proud rebel, and that is why you do not believe your God. Give up your rebellion; throw down your weapons; yield at discretion; surrender to your King. I believe that never did a soul throw up its hands in self-despair, and cry, "Lord, I yield," but what faith became easy to it before long. It is because you still have a quarrel with God, and intend to have your own will and your own way, that therefore you cannot believe. "How can ye believe," said Christ, "that have honour one of another?" Proud self creates unbelief. Submit, O man. Yield to your God, and then shall you sweetly believe in your Saviour. God bless you, for Christ's sake, and bring you at this very moment to believe in the Lord Jesus. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 554.

NOTE.—While revising this sermon I felt moved to ask my readers to circulate it. I tried to be very simple, and I think I succeeded. If you, dear reader, think the sermon likely to show the way of salvation to those around you, will you not get extra copies and give them away? The preacher of the sermon and the giver of it will rejoice together if, by their united effort, men are saved in Jesus.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

A MINIATURE PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 24TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Lord was with Joseph.”—Genesis xxxix. 2.

SCRIPTURE frequently sums up a man's life in a single sentence. Here is the biography of Joseph sketched by inspiration:—“God was with him,” so Stephen testified in his famous speech recorded in Acts vii. 9. Here is the life-story of Abraham: “Abraham believed God.” Of Moses we read, “The man Moses was very meek.” Take a New Testament life, such as that of John the Baptist, and you have it in a line: “John did no miracle: but all things that he spake concerning Jesus were true.” The mere name of John—“that disciple whom Jesus loved”—would serve for an epitaph of him: it pictures both the man and his history. Holy Scripture excels in this kind of full-length miniature painting. As Michael Angelo is said to have drawn a portrait with a single stroke of his crayon, so the Spirit of God sketches a man to the life in a single sentence. “The Lord was with Joseph.”

Observe, however, that the portraits of Scripture give us not only the outer, but the inner life of the man. Man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh upon the heart; and so the Scriptural descriptions of men are not of their visible life alone, but of their spiritual life. Here we have Joseph as God saw him, the real Joseph. Externally it did not always appear that God was with him, for he did not always seem to be a prosperous man; but when you come to look into the inmost soul of this servant of God, you see his true likeness—he lived in communion with the Most High, and God blessed him: “The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man.” Dear friends, how would you like to have your inner biography sketched? How would your soul appear if set out in detail before all the world as to its desires, affections, and thoughts? Many lives have looked well on paper, but beneath their surface the biographer never dared to dive, or, perhaps, could not have dived had he been anxious to do so. It is often thought wise in writing a man's life to suppress certain matters: this may be prudent if the design be to guard a reputation, but it is scarcely truthful. The Spirit of God does not suppress the faults even of those whom we most admire, but writes them fully, like the Spirit of truth, as

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he is. The man who above others was "a man after God's own heart," was yet in some points exceedingly faulty, and he committed one foul deed which will remain through all time as a blemish upon his character. There was in David so firm and undeviating an attachment to the Lord God, and so sincere a desire to do right, and so deep a repentance when he had erred, that the Lord still regarded him as after his own heart, although he smote him heavily for his transgressions. David was a truly sincere man despite the faults into which he fell, and it is the heart of David which is sketched. So here, the Spirit is not looking so much at Joseph as a favourite child, or an Egyptian prime minister, as at the innermost and truest Joseph, and therefore he thus describes him, "the Lord was with Joseph."

This striking likeness of Joseph strongly reminds us of our Master and Lord, that greater Joseph, who is Lord over all the world for the sake of Israel. Peter, in his sermon to the household of Cornelius, said of our Lord that he "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for *God was with him.*" Exactly what had been said of Joseph. It is wonderful that the same words should describe both Jesus and Joseph, the perfect Saviour and the imperfect patriarch. When you and I are perfected in grace, we shall wear the image of Christ, and that which will describe Christ will also describe us. Those who live with Jesus will be transformed by his fellowship till they become like him. To my mind, it is very beautiful to see the resemblance between the firstborn and the rest of the family, between the great typical man, the Second Adam, and all those men who are quickened into his life, and are one with him.

This having the Lord with us is the inheritance of all the saints; for what is the apostolic benediction in the epistles but a desire that the triune God may be with us? To the church in Rome Paul saith, "Now the God of peace be with you all." To the church in Corinth he writes, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." To the Thessalonians he saith, "The Lord be with you all." Did not our glorious Lord say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"? How better could I salute you this morning than in the words of Boaz to the reapers, "The Lord be with you"? What kinder answer could you give me than "The Lord bless thee"? High up upon the mountains which form the back wall of Mentone I happened one day to meet a Quaker, in the usual costume, a warmhearted lover of all who love Jesus. He saluted me, and we found great unity of spirit. On parting, I said, "Friend, the Lord be with thee"; and he answered, "And with thy spirit," adding, "It is the first bit of the liturgy that I have ever used." Truly, the oftener we can use it with our hearts the better, for none can object to it. Thus do I say to all of you this day, "The Lord be with you," and I know that you are responding, "And with thy spirit." May you find that your desire is granted, by the Holy Spirit's being with my Spirit that I may speak words which shall refresh your hearts.

Now let us think of Joseph, and see what we can learn from him. "The Lord was with Joseph": let us consider, first, *the fact*; secondly, *the evidence of that fact*; and thirdly, *the result of that fact.*

I. First, we will run over Joseph's life, and note THE FACT: "The Lord was with Joseph." God was gracious to Joseph as a *child*. His father loved him because he was the son of his old age, and also because of the gracious qualities which he saw in him. Before he was seventeen years of age God had spoken with him in dreams and visions of the night, of which we read that "his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying." Dear young people, it may be that God will not appear to you in dreams, but he has other ways of speaking to his young Samuels. You remember he said "Samuel, Samuel," and the beloved child answered, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." May you answer in the same manner to the call of God by his word. It was the happy privilege of some of us before we had left boyhood and girlhood to have received gracious communications from God: he led us to repentance, he led us to faith in Christ, and he revealed his love in our hearts before we had left the schoolroom and the playground. They begin well who begin early with Christ: he will be with us to the end if we are with him at the beginning. If Joseph had not been a godly boy he might never have been a gracious man: grace made him to differ from his brothers in youth, and he remained their superior all his days. If we are gracious while we are yet children we may be sure that the Lord will be gracious to us even should we live to old age, and see our children's children. Early piety is likely to be eminent piety. Happy are those who have Christ with them in the morning, for they shall walk with him all day, and sweetly rest with him at eventide.

"The Lord was with Joseph" when Joseph was at home, and he did not desert him when he was sent away from his dear father and his beloved home and was sold for a *slave*. Bitter is the lot of a slave in any country, and it was worst of all in those early days. We are told by Stephen that the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt, but the Lord was with him; even when he was being sold the Lord was with Joseph. It must have been a very dreadful journey for him across the desert, urged onward by those rough Ishmaelites, probably travelling in a gang, as slaves do to this day in the centre of Africa. May God put an end to the abominable system! This delicate child of an indulgent father, who had been clothed with a princely garment of many colours, must now wear the garb of a slave, and march in the hot sun across the burning sand; but never was captive more submissive under cruel treatment, he endured as seeing him who is invisible; his heart was sustained by a deep confidence in the God of his father Jacob, for "Jehovah was with him." I think I see him in the slave market exposed for sale. We have heard with what trembling anxiety the slave peers into the faces of those who are about to buy. Will he get a good master? Will one purchase him who will treat him like a man, or one who will use him worse than a brute? "The Lord was with Joseph" as he stood there to be sold, and he fell into good hands. When he was taken away to his master's house, and the various duties of his service were allotted to him, the Lord was with Joseph. The house of the Egyptian had never been so pure, so honest, so honoured before. Beneath Joseph's charge it was secretly the temple of his devotions, and manifestly the abode of comfort and confidence. That Hebrew slave had a glory of character about him, which

all perceived, and especially his master, for we read,—“ His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand. And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him : and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand. And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake ; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had in the house and in the field.” Joseph's diligence, integrity, and gentleness won upon his master, as well they might. O that all of you who are Christian servants would imitate Joseph in this, and so behave yourselves that all around you may see that the Lord is with you.

Then came a crisis in his history, the time of testing. We see Joseph *tried by a temptation* in which, alas, so many perish. He was attacked in a point at which youth is peculiarly vulnerable. His comely person made him the object of unholy solicitations from one upon whose goodwill his comfort greatly depended, and had it not been that the Lord was with him he must have fallen. The mass of mankind would scarcely have blamed him had he sinned : they would have cast the crime upon the tempter, and excused the frailty of youth. I say not so ; God forbid I should ; for in acts of uncleanness neither of the transgressors may be excused ; but God was with Joseph, and he did not slide when set in slippery places. Thus he escaped that deep pit into which the abhorred of the Lord do fall. He was rescued from the snare of the strange woman, of whom Solomon has said, “ She hath cast down many wounded ; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.” Slavery itself was a small calamity compared with that which would have happened to young Joseph had he been enslaved by wicked passions. Happily, the Lord was with him, and enabled him to overcome the tempter with the question, “ How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? ” He fled. That flight was the truest display of courage. It is the only way of victory in sins of the flesh. The apostle says, “ Flee youthful lusts which war against the soul.” When Telemachus was in the isle of Calypso his mentor cried, “ Fly, Telemachus, fly ; there remains no hope of a victory but by flight.” Wisely Joseph left his garment and fled, for God was with him.

The scene shifts again, and he who had been first a favoured child at home, and then a slave, and then a tempted one, now becomes a *prisoner*. The prisons of Egypt were, doubtless, as horrible as all such places were in the olden times, and here is Joseph in the noisome dungeon. He evidently felt his imprisonment very much, for we are told in the Psalms that “ the iron entered into his soul.” He felt it a cruel thing to be under such a slander, and to suffer for his innocence. A young man so pure, so chaste, must have felt it to be sharper than a whip of scorpions to be accused as he was ; yet as he sat down in the gloom of his cell, the Lord was with him. The degradation of a prison had not deprived him of his divine companion. Blessed be the name of the Lord, he does not forsake his people when they are in **trouble** : nay, he is more pleasant with them when they are falsely

accused than at any other time, and he cheers them in their low estate. God was with him, and very soon the kindly manners, the gentleness, the activity, the truthfulness, the industry of Joseph had won upon the keeper of the prison, so that Joseph rose again to the top, and was the overseer of the prison. Like a cork, which you may push down, but it is sure to come up again, so was Joseph: he must swim, he could not drown, the Lord was with him. The Lord's presence made him a king and a priest wherever he went, and men tacitly owned his influence. In the little kingdom of the prison Joseph reigned, for "God was with him." He will rise higher than that, however, when opportunity arises for a display of *prophetic power*. Two of those under his charge appeared to be despondent one morning, and with his usual gentleness he asked, "Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" He was always kindly and sympathetic, and so they told him their dreams, and he interpreted them as the events actually fell out. But why did he interpret dreams? It was because God was with him. He tells them there and then that "interpretations belong unto God." It was not that he had knowledge of an occult art, or was clever at guessing, but the Spirit of God rested upon him, and so he understood the secrets veiled beneath the dreams. This led to further steps, for after having been tried from seventeen to thirty, after having served thirteen years' apprenticeship to sorrow he came to stand *before Pharaoh*, and God is with him there. You can see that he is inwardly upheld, for the Hebrew youth stands boldly forth and talks of God in an idolatrous court. Pharaoh believed in multitudes of gods: he worshipped the crocodile, the ibis, the bull, and all manner of things, even down to leeks and onions, so that one said of the Egyptians, "Happy people, whose gods grow in their own gardens"; but Joseph was not ashamed to speak of his God as the only living and true God. He said, "What God is about to do he showeth unto Pharaoh." Calmly, and in a dignified manner, he unravels the dream, and explains it all to Pharaoh, disclaiming, however, all credit for wisdom. He says, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." God was with him indeed.

Joseph was made *ruler* over all Egypt, and God was with him. Well did the king say, "Can we find such a man as this is in whom the Spirit of God is?" His policy in storing up corn in the plenteous years succeeded admirably, for God was evidently working by him to preserve the human race from extinction by famine. His whole system, if looked at as executed in the interest of Pharaoh, his master, was beyond measure sensible and successful. He was not the servant of the Egyptians: Pharaoh had promoted him, and Pharaoh he enriched, and at the same time saved a nation from hunger.

God was with him in bringing down his father and the family into Egypt, and locating them in Goshen, and with him till he himself came to die, when he "took an oath of the children of Israel, saying God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence." The Lord was with him, and kept him faithful to the covenant, and the covenanted race, even to the close of a long life of one hundred and ten years. He died faithful to the close to the God of his fathers, for he would not be numbered with Egypt, with all its

learning and all its wealth; he chose to be accounted an Israelite, and to share with the chosen race, whatever their fortunes might be. He, like the rest of the patriarchs, died in faith, looking for the promised inheritance, and for its sake renouncing the riches and glories of the world, for the Lord was with him.

II. We shall next review THE EVIDENCE OF THE FACT that God was with him. What is the evidence that the Lord was with Joseph? The first evidence of it is this: *he was always under the influence of the divine presence*, and lived in the enjoyment of it. I shall not need to quote the instances—all of them, at any rate—for everywhere, whenever Joseph's heart speaks, he lets you know that he is conscious that God is with him. Take him under temptation especially. Oh, what a mercy it was for him that he was a God-fearing man! "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against *Potiphar*?" No. Yet he would have sinned against Potiphar, who had been a kindly master to him. Does he say, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against *this woman*?" for it would have been a sin against her. No; but just as David said, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," making the main point and consideration to be sin against God, so did Joseph, as he fled from the seducer, argue thus,— "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin *against God*?" Oh, if you and I always felt that God was near, looking steadily upon us, we should not dare to sin. The presence of a superior often checks a man from doing what else he might have ventured on, and the presence of God, if it were realised, would be a perpetual barrier against temptation, and would keep us steadfast in holiness. When Joseph afterwards at any time spoke of God, when God helped him not only to stand against temptation but to do any service, you will notice how he always ascribes it to God. He will not interpret Pharaoh's dream without first telling him, "It is not in me: God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do." He was as conscious of the presence of God when he stood before the great monarch as when he refused that sinful woman. It was the same in his domestic life. Let me read out of his family register. "And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him. And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house. And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction." When his aged father said to him, "Who are these?" he replied very beautifully, "They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place." I am afraid that we do not habitually talk in this fashion, but Joseph did. Without the slightest affectation he spoke out of his heart, under a sense of the divine presence and working. How like he is in this to our divine Lord! I cannot help speaking of it. If there is any good thing more marked about our Lord Jesus than another it is his sense of the divine presence. You see it when he is a child: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" You hear it in the words, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me"; and again, "I know that thou hearest me always." You perceive it forcibly in the last moment of his earthly life, when the sharpest pang that tortures him is that which makes him cry, "My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The presence of God was everything to Christ as it was to Joseph. Now, if you and I set the Lord always before us, if our soul dwells in God, depend upon it God is with us. There is no mistake about it. If you are under the influence of that text, "Thou God seest me," you may be sure that his presence will go with you, and he will give you rest. No man ever perceived God to be present and therefore walked before him in holiness, and afterwards discovered that he had been under a delusion. Grace in the life proves that the God of grace is with us.

The next evidence is this: God was certainly with Joseph because *he was pure in heart*. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;" no other can do so. God will not manifest himself to those whose hearts are unclean. He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, he shall dwell on high. Our Lord Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." When the heart is shocked at sin, and enamoured of holiness, then it can enter into communion with God, and not till then. "Can two walk together unless they be agreed?" When I hear some professors admit that they have little communion with God, can I wonder at it? How can God have fellowship with us unless we walk obediently in his ways? What fellowship hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial? The intense purity of Joseph was a proof that the thrice holy God was ever with him. He will keep the feet of his saints. When they are tempted he will deliver them from evil, for his presence sheds an atmosphere of holiness around the heart in which he dwells.

The next evidence in Joseph's case was *the diligence with which he exercised himself wherever he was*. God was with Joseph, and therefore the man of God hardly cared as to the outward circumstances of his position, but began at once to work that which is good. He was in the pit: yes, but the Lord was with Joseph, and the pit was not horrible to him: he pleaded with his brothers, and although they would not hear, he did his duty in warning them of their crime. He was carried captive of the Ishmaelites; but in the caravan he was safe, for God was with him. When he came to be a slave in Potiphar's house, the Lord was with him, and he was a prosperous man; the change of scene was not a change of his dearest company. He did not strike an attitude, and make a display of his grand intentions, but he went to work where he was, and performed ordinary duties with great heartiness, for the Lord was with him. Many would have said, "I have been unrighteously sold for a slave. I ought not to be here, and I am not bound to perform any duties to Potiphar: rightfully I am a free man, as free as Potiphar, and I shall not work for him for nothing." No, the Lord was with him, and therefore he applied himself to that which lay next to hand, and went to work with a will. No doubt he performed menial service in the house at first, and then, by degrees, he rose to be the manager of the establishment. The truly godly man is ready for anything: he does not sigh for place, but accepts the state in which he is found, and does good in it, for the Lord's sake. The Lord was with Joseph none the less when he was cast into the prison. He knew God was with him in prison, and therefore he did not sit down sullenly in his

sorrow, but he bestirred himself to make the best of his afflicted condition. Since the Lord was with him there he was comforted; it would be infinitely better to be there with God than on the throne of Pharaoh without God. He did not mourn and moan, and spend his time in writing petitions to Potiphar, or making appeals to Potiphar. He set himself to be of service to his fellow-prisoners and the warders, and very soon he was to the front again, for "The Lord was with him." When he came to be exalted, and Pharaoh made him to be ruler over Egypt, notice what he did. He did not strut about, or take his ease at court; he did not stop to enjoy his honours in peace, and leave others to do the business, but he set to his work personally and at once. Read chapter xli. 45: "And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt." Then read the next verse: "And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt." No sooner did he get the office than he gave himself to the execution of it, personally inspecting the whole country. Many are so worn out by their toils in getting a place that they have no strength left for performing its duties. When they get a new situation their first consideration is how they shall spend the profits of it. Place-hunters seldom try to make themselves fit for the situation, but crave the position whether they are fit for it or not. Many when they get an office are exceedingly skilful in showing how *not* to do it; they get into the circumlocution office, and pass on everything to the next clerk, and he to the next, so that nothing is done. With them procrastination is the very hinge of business, and punctuality the thief of time. They do as little as they can for the money, upon the theory that if you are too energetic your labours will be too cheap. Joseph, however, was not of that sort, for no sooner was he made commissioner-general of Egypt, than he was up to his eyes in the task of building storehouses, and gathering up grain to fill them. By his wonderful economic policy he supplied the people in the time of famine, and in the process the power of Pharaoh was greatly strengthened. The Lord was with him, therefore he did not think of the honour to which he had been promoted, but of the responsibility which had been laid upon him, and he gave himself wholly to his great work. That is what you and I must do if we are to give practical proof that God is with us.

But notice again, God was with Joseph, and *that made him tender and sympathetic*. Some men who are prompt enough in business are rough, coarse, hard; but not so Joseph. His tenderness distinguishes him; he is full of loving consideration. When he had prisoners in his charge he did not treat them roughly, but with much consideration. He watched their countenances, enquired into their troubles, and was willing to do all in his power for them. This was one secret of his success in life; he was everybody's friend. He who is willing to be the servant of all, the same shall be the chief of all. God was with Joseph, and taught him compassion, for God himself is very pitiful, and full of sympathy for the suffering.

Perhaps you will object to this, that Joseph seemed for a while to afflict and tantalize his brothers. By no means. He was seeking their good. The love he bore to them was wise and prudent. God, who is more loving than Joseph, frequently afflicts us to bring us to

repentance, and to heal us of many evils. Joseph wished to bring his brethren into a right state of heart, and he succeeded in it, though the process was more painful to him than to them. At last he could not restrain himself, but burst into weeping before them all, for there was a big loving heart under the Egyptian garb of Joseph. He loved with all his soul, and so will every man who has God with him, for "God is love." If you do not love, God is not with you. If you go through the world selfish and morose, bitter, suspicious, bigoted, hard, the devil is with you, God is not; for where God is he expands the spirit, he causes us to love all mankind with the love of benevolence, and he makes us take a sweet complacency in the chosen brotherhood of Israel, so that we specially delight to do good to all those who are of the household of faith. This was a mark that God was with him.

Another mark of God's presence with Joseph is *his great wisdom*. He did everything as it ought to be done. You can scarcely alter anything in Joseph's life to improve it, and I think if I admire his wisdom in one thing more than another it is in his wonderful silence. It is easy to talk, comparatively easy to talk well, but to be quiet is the difficulty. He never said a word, that I can learn, about Potiphar's wife. It seemed necessary to his own defence, but he would not accuse the woman; he let judgment go by default, and left her to her own conscience and her husband's cooler consideration. This showed great power; it is hard for a man to compress his lips, saying nothing when his character is at stake. So eloquent was Joseph in his silence that there is not a word of complaint throughout the whole record of his life. We cannot say that of all the Bible saints, for many of them complained bitterly, indeed we have whole books of lamentations. We do not condemn those who did complain, but we greatly admire those, who like sheep before the shearers, were dumb. The iron entered into his soul, but *he* does not tell us so; we look to the Psalms for that information; he bore in calm resignation all the great Father's will. When his brothers stood before him, the cruel men who sold him, he did not upbraid them, but he comforted them, saying, "Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Making sweet excuse for them, he said, "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save yourselves by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." How different from the spirit of those people who pry about, seeking to discover faults, and when an imperfection is marked, they cry, "Look! Do you see that? I told you so. These good men are no better than they should be." Yes, it may be true that there are spots in the sun, but there are greater spots in your eyes or you would see more of the light. Those who see faults so readily have plenty of their own. Like the man who stole the goods and ran away, they try to turn the scent by calling, "Thief, thief," after others. May God make us blind to the faults of his people, sooner than allow us to have a lynx eye for their flaws and an inventive faculty to ascribe ill motives to them. I wish we were as wisely silent as Joseph was. We may often repent of speech, but I think very seldom of silence. You may complain, and be justified in the complaint, but you will have far more

glory if you do not complain. For what was there, after all, for Joseph to complain of, since the Lord was with him? He was in prison: that is something to complain of. Yes, but if the Lord was with him the prison was no longer dreary. I would gladly go to prison any day if the Lord would be with me. Who would not? But Joseph was away from his beloved father, and the trotting of those little feet that he loved so much to hear—the feet of little brother Benjamin. I am sure Joseph always missed his mother's only other son, his only full brother. It was a great grief to him to be away from home, but still he was quiet, calm, and happy. God is with him if Benjamin is not; if father Jacob is away, God is present: thus he finds no cause for bitter lament, but much reason for accepting his lot and doing his best in each condition.

“God was with him,” and this is the last evidence I give of it, that *he was kept faithful to the covenant*, faithful to Israel and to Israel's God right through. Pharaoh gave him in marriage the daughter of a priest: and the priests were the highest class throughout Egypt, and Joseph was thus promoted to be of the nobility by marriage, as well as to be at the head of all the nobility by office. They cried before him, “Bow the knee,” and everyone honoured him throughout all the land of Egypt. Yet he would not be an Egyptian: he was an Israelite still, and his good old father, when he came down into Egypt, found him one of the family in heart and soul. His father's blessing was greatly prized by him, and he obtained it for himself and for his sons. I notice with much pain that many professors who prosper in this world have not God with them, for they turn into Egyptians: they do not now care for the simple worship of God's people, but they sigh for something more showy and more respectable. They want society, and so they seek out a fashionable church, and swallow their principles. They lay it all upon their children, for who can expect young ladies and gentlemen to attend an ordinary meeting-house, where such low people go? For the sake of the young people they are bound to mix with society, and so they leave their principles, their people, and their God. They become Egyptians; indeed, some of them would become devil-worshippers to gain rank and status. Off they go to Egypt, shoals of them, I have seen it, and shall see it again. If some of you get rich I dare say you will do the same; it seems to be the way of men. As soon as a professor prospers in the world he is ashamed of the truth he once loved. Such apostates will find it heavy work to die. Verily, I say unto you, instead of their being ashamed of us, we have good reason to be ashamed of them, for it is to their disgrace that they cannot be content to associate with God's chosen because they happen to be poor, and perhaps illiterate. Joseph stuck to his people and to their God: though he must live in Egypt, he will not be an Egyptian; he will not even leave his dead body to lie in an Egyptian pyramid. The Egyptians built a costly tomb for Joseph: it stands to this day, but his body is not there. “I charge you,” says he, “take my bones with you; for I do not belong to Egypt, my place is in the land of promise.” “He gave commandment concerning his bones.” Let others do as they will; as for me, my lot is cast with those who follow the Lord fully. Yes, my Lord, where thou dwellest I will dwell; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God, and may my children be thy children to the last

generation. If the Lord is with you that is what you will say, but if he is not with you, and you prosper in the world, and increase in riches, you will turn your back on Christ and his people, and we shall have to say as Paul did, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

III. Thirdly, let us observe, THE RESULT OF GOD'S BEING WITH JOSEPH. The result was that "he was a prosperous man"; but notice that, although the Lord was with Joseph, *it did not screen him from hatred*. "The Lord was with him, but his brethren hated him. Ay, and if the Lord loves a man, the world will spite him. We know that we are God's children, because the adversaries of God are our adversaries. Furthermore, "The Lord was with Joseph," but it did not screen him from *temptation* of the worst kind: it did not prevent his mistress casting her wicked eyes upon him. The best of men may be tempted to the worst of crimes. The presence of God did not screen him from *slander*: the base woman accused him of outrageous wickedness, and God permitted Potiphar to believe her. You and I would have said, "If the Lord be with us how can this evil happen to us?" Ah, but the Lord was with him, and yet he was a slandered man. Nay, the divine presence did not screen him from *pain*: he sat in prison wearing fetters till the iron entered into his soul, and yet "The Lord was with him." That presence did not save him from *disappointment*. He said to the butler, "Think of me when it is well with thee"; but the butler altogether forgot him. Everything may seem to go against you, and yet God may be with you. The Lord does not promise you that you shall have what looks like prosperity, but you shall have what is real prosperity in the best sense.

Now, what did God's being with Joseph do for him? First, *it saved him from gross sin*. He flees, he shuts his ears: he flees and conquers; for God is with him. O young friend, if God is with you in the hour of temptation, you will want no better, no grander result than to remain perfectly pure, with garments unspotted by the flesh.

God was with him, and the next result was *it enabled him to act grandly*. Wherever he is he does the right thing, does it splendidly. If he is a slave his master finds that he never had such a servant before; if he is in prison, those dungeons were never charmed by the presence of such a ministering angel before; if he is exalted to be with Pharaoh, Pharaoh never had such a Chancellor of the exchequer in Egypt before, never was Egyptian finance so prosperous.

In such a manner did God help Joseph that he was enabled to *fulfil a glorious destiny*, for if Noah be the world's second father, what shall we say of Joseph, but that he was its foster nurse? The human race had died of famine if Joseph's foresight had not laid by in store the produce of the seven plenteous years, for there was a famine over all lands. The breasts of Joseph nourished all mankind. It was no mean position for the young Hebrew to occupy, to be manager of the commissariat of the whole known world. If God be with us we shall fulfil a noble destiny too. It may not be so widely known, so visible to human eye, but life is always ennobled by the presence of God.

Also *it gave him a very happy life*, for taking the life of Joseph all through it is an enviable one. Nobody would think of putting him

down among the miserable. If we had to make a selection of unhappy men, we certainly should not think of Joseph. No, it was a great life and a happy life; and such will yours be if God be with you.

And, to finish, God gave Joseph and his family a *double portion in Israel*, which never happened to any other of the twelve sons of Jacob. Jacob said, "And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee into Egypt are mine; as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine," thus making them into a tribe each. Ephraim and Manasseh each stood at the head of a tribe as if they had been actually sons of Jacob. Levi is taken out of the twelve, and provision is made for the Levites as servants of God, and then Ephraim and Manasseh are put in, so that Joseph's house figures twice among the twelve. There are two Josephs in Israel but only one Judah. Joseph has a double portion of the kingdom. Those who begin early with God, and stand fast to the end, and hold to God both in trouble and prosperity, shall see their children brought to the Lord, and in their children they shall possess the double, yea, the Lord shall render unto them double for all they may lose in honour for his name's sake. It may be they shall live to see the hand of the Lord upon their children and their children's children, and to them shall be fulfilled the word, "In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." Let us seek after a double part with God's people by keeping heartily with them. Who is willing to suffer with them that he may reign with them? Who is willing to cast the riches of Egypt behind his back that he may have a double portion in the promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey? I think I hear some of you say, "Here I am, sir. I shall be glad enough to share with God's people, be it what it may." Carry Christ's cross and you shall wear Christ's crown. Go with him through the mire and through the slough, and you shall be with him in the palaces of glory; you shall share a double portion with him in the day of his appearing. This can only be because the Lord is with you: that must be the beginning and end of it. "The Lord was with Joseph:" O Lord, be with us. O thou, whose name is Immanuel, God with us, be with us, henceforth and for ever. Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63 (Part III.), 732, 630.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xxxix. 1—6;
Psalm lxii. 20—23.

MR. SPURGEON preaches on Sundays at 11 and 6.30, and on Thursday evenings at 7. Friends by coming a little early will readily obtain admission on Sundays, and on Thursdays there is always room. The Prayer-meeting on Mondays at 7 is a great gathering of praying people.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WORD OF THE CROSS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 31ST, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNALE, NEWINGTON.

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."—1 Corinthians i. 18.

NOTE well that in the seventeenth verse Paul had renounced the "wisdom of words." He says that he was sent to preach the gospel, "not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." It is very clear, therefore, that there is an excellence, elegance, and eloquence of language which would deprive the gospel of its due effect. I have never yet heard that the cross of Christ was made of none effect by great plainness of speech, nor even by ruggedness of language; but it is the "wisdom of words" which is said to have this destroying power. Oh, dreadful wisdom of words! God grant that we may be delivered from making attempts at it, for we ought earnestly to shun anything and everything which can be so mischievous in its influence as to make the cross of Christ of none effect.

The "wisdom of words" works evil at times by veiling the truth which ought to be set forth in the clearest possible manner. The doctrine of atonement by blood, which is the essence of the preaching of the cross, is objectionable to many minds, and hence certain preachers take care not to state it too plainly. Prudently, as they call it,—craftily, as the apostle Paul would call it, they tone down the objectionable features of the great sacrifice, hoping by pretty phrases somewhat to remove the "offence of the cross." Proud minds object to substitution, which is the very edge of the doctrine; hence theories are adopted which leave out the idea of laying sin upon the Saviour, and making him to be a curse for us. Self-sacrifice is set forth as possessing a high, heroic influence by which we are stimulated to self-salvation, but the Lord's suffering as the just for the unjust is not mentioned. The cross in such a case is not at all the cross by which self-condemned sinners can be comforted, and the hardened can be subdued, but quite another matter. Those who thus veil an unwelcome truth imagine that they make disciples, whereas they are only paying homage to unbelief, and comforting men in their rejection of the divine propitiation for sin.

No. 1,611.

Whatever the preacher may mean in his heart, he will be guilty of the blood of souls if he does not clearly proclaim a real sacrifice for sin.

Too often the "wisdom of words" explains the gospel away. It is possible to refine a doctrine till the very soul of it is gone; you may draw such nice distinctions that the true meaning is filtered away. Certain divines tell us that they must adapt truth to the advance of the age, which means that they must murder it and fling its dead body to the dogs. It is asserted that the advanced philosophy of the nineteenth century requires a progressive theology to keep abreast of it; which simply means that a popular lie shall take the place of an offensive truth. Under pretence of winning the cultured intellects of the age, "the wisdom of words" has gradually landed us in a denial of those first principles for which the martyrs died. Apologies for the gospel, in which the essence of it is conceded to the unbeliever, are worse than infidelity. I hate that defence of the gospel which razes it to the ground to preserve it from destruction.

The "wisdom of words," however, is more frequently used with the intent of adorning the gospel, and making it to appear somewhat more beautiful than it would be in its natural form. They would paint the rose and enamel the lily, add whiteness to snow and brightness to the sun. With their wretched candles they would help us to see the stars. O superfluity of naughtiness! The cross of Christ is sublimely simple; to adorn it is to dishonour it. There is no statement under heaven more musical than this: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them": all the bells that you could ring to make it more harmonious would only add a jingle jangle to its heavenly melody, which is in itself so sweet that it charms the harpers before the throne of God. The doctrine that God descended upon the earth in human nature, and in that nature bore our sins, and carried our sorrows, and made expiation for our transgressions by the death of the cross, is in itself matchless poetry, the perfection of all that is ennobling in thought and creed. Yet the attempt is made to decorate the gospel, as though it needed somewhat to commend it to the understanding and the heart. The result is that men's minds are attracted from the gospel either to the preacher or to some utterly indifferent point. Hearers carry home charming morsels of poetry, but they forget the precious blood; they recollect the elaborate metaphors so daintily wrought out, but they forget the five wounds, and fail to look unto the Lord Jesus and be saved. The truth is buried under flowers. Brethren, let us cut out of our sermons everything that takes men's minds away from the cross. One look at Jesus is better than the most attentive gazing at our gems of speech. One of the old masters found that certain vases which he had depicted upon the sacramental table attracted more notice than the face of the Lord, whom he had painted sitting at the head of the feast, and therefore he struck them out at once: let us, my brethren, do the same whenever anything of ours withdraws the mind from Jesus. Christ must ever be in the foreground, and our sermons must point to him, or they will do more harm than good. We must preach Christ crucified, and set him forth like the sun in the heavens, as the sole light of men.

Some seem to imagine that the gospel does not contain within itself

sufficient force for its own spreading, and therefore they dream that if it is to have power among men it must either be through the logical way in which it is put—in which case all glory be to logic, or through the handsome manner in which it is stated—in which case all glory be to rhetoric. The notion is current that we should seek the aid of prestige, or talent, or novelty, or excitement; for the gospel itself, the doctrine of the cross, is in itself impotent in its hands and lame upon its feet, and must be sustained by outside power, and carried as by a nurse whithersoever it would go. Reason, elocution, art, music, or some other force must introduce and support it, or it will make no advance—so some injuriously dream. That is not Paul's notion; he speaks of the cross of Christ as being itself the power of God, and he says that it is to be preached "not with wisdom of words," lest the power should be attributed to the aforesaid wisdom of words, and the cross of Christ should be proven to have in itself no independent power, or, in other words, to be of none effect. Paul would not thus degrade the cross for a moment, and, therefore, though qualified to dispute with schoolmen and philosophers, he disdained to dazzle with arguments and sophistries; and, though he himself could speak with masterly energy—let his epistles bear witness to that—yet he used great plainness of speech, that the force of his teaching might lie in the doctrine itself, and not in his language, style, or delivery. He was jealous of the honour of the cross, and would not spread it by any force but its own, even as he says in the fourth and fifth verses of the second chapter of this epistle—
 "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

Having cleared our way of the wisdom of words, we now come to the word of wisdom. Paul preached the cross, and our first head shall be *the word of the cross*. Many give the cross a bad word, and so our second head shall be *the word of its despisers concerning it*, they called it foolishness: and then, thirdly, we will think upon *the word applied to the cross by those who believe it*; it is to them "the power of God." O that the Holy Spirit may use it as the power of God to all of us this day.

I. First, then, we speak upon "THE WORD OF THE CROSS." I borrow the term from the Revised Version, which runs thus:—"The word of the cross is to to them that are perishing foolishness, but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God." This is, to my mind, an accurate translation. The original is not "the preaching of the cross," but "the word of the cross." This rendering gives us a heading for our first division and at the same time brings before us exactly what the gospel is, it is "the word of the cross."

From which I gather, first, that *the cross has one uniform teaching*, or word. We are always to preach the word of the cross, and the cross hath not many words, but one. There are not two gospels any more than there are two Gods: there are not two atonements any more than there are two Saviours. There is one gospel as there is one God, and there is one atonement as there is one Saviour. Other gospels are not tolerated among earnest Christians. What said the apostle, "If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be candidly heard and quietly

fraternized with. Nothing of the sort. I will quote the Scripture. Paul saith, "Let him be accursed." He has no more tolerance than that for him, for Paul loved the souls of men, and for to tolerate spiritual poison is to aid and abet the murder of souls. There is no gospel under heaven, but the one gospel of Jesus Christ. But what about other voices and other words? They are not voices from heaven, nor words from God, for he hath not in one place spoken one thing, and in another place another; neither is it according to the spirit of the gospel that there should be one form of gospel for the first six centuries, and then another mood of it for the nineteenth century. Is it not written, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"? If the atonement were in progress, if the great sacrifice were not complete, then I could understand that there should be progress in the preaching of it; but inasmuch as "It is finished" was pronounced by Christ upon the tree, and then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, there can be no further development in the fact or in the doctrine. Inasmuch as the word of the Lord which describes that atonement is so complete that he that addeth thereunto shall have the plagues that are written in this book added unto him, I gather that there is no such thing as a progressive word of the cross, but that the gospel is the same gospel to-day as it was when Paul in the beginning proclaimed it. The word of the cross, since it is the express word of God, endureth for ever. Generations of men come and go like yearly growths of the grass of the field, but the word of the Lord abideth evermore the same in all places, the same to all nationalities, the same to all temperaments and constitutions of the mind. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid."

From that word I gather, next, that the doctrine of the atonement is *one word in contradistinction from many other words which are constantly being uttered*. We preach Christ crucified, and his voice from the cross is, "Look unto me and be ye saved"; but another voice cries aloud, "This do and thou shalt live." We know it, it is the voice of the old covenant which the Lord Jesus hath removed, taking away the first covenant that he may establish the second. The doctrine of salvation by works, salvation by feelings, salvation by outward religiousness, is not the word of the cross, which speaketh in quite another fashion. The call to salvation by works is a strange voice within the fold of the church, and the sheep of Christ do not follow it, for they know not the voice of strangers. The word of the gospel speaketh on this wise—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "Believe and live" is the word of the cross.

Much less do we regard the word of ceremonialism and priestcraft which still lingers among us. We had thought it was a dull echo of the dead past, but, alas, it is a powerful voice, and is constantly lifting up itself. Priestcraft is crying, "Confess to me and thou shalt have forgiveness. Perform this ceremony, and undergo the other rite, and thou shalt receive a sacred benediction through men ordained of heaven." This voice we know not, for it is the voice of falsehood. He

that believeth in Christ Jesus hath everlasting life : we are complete in him, and we know nothing of any priest save that one High Priest, who, by his one sacrifice, hath perfected for ever them that are set apart. Voices here and there are heard like mutterings from among the tombs ; these are the maunderings of superstition, saying, "Lo, here," and "Lo, there," and one man hath this revealed to him, and another that ; but to none of these have we any regard ; for God hath spoken, and our preaching henceforth is nothing but "the word of the cross," which is none other than the word of the crucified Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.

Brethren, let us hear this word of the cross, for in effect my text says, "*Let the cross speak for itself.*" That is to be our preaching. We bid reasoning and speculation hold their tongues that the cross itself may speak. We let the cross speak its own word.

First, it cries aloud, *God must be just.* The dreadful voice of justice in its certainty and severity rings through the world in the sighs and cries and death-groans of the Son of the Highest. Jesus has taken man's sin upon himself, and he must die for it, for be sin where it may, God must smite it. The Judge of all the earth must do right, and it is right that sin should involve suffering. Supreme justice must visit iniquity with death : and therefore Jesus on the cross, though in himself perfectly innocent and unspeakably lovely, must die the death, deserted by his Father because the iniquity of us all has been made to meet upon him. The cross cries unto the sons of men, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which God hates, for he will by no means spare the guilty." God must make bare mine arm, and bathe his sword in heaven to smite sin wherever it is found, for he smites it even when it is imputed to his only Son ! The cross thunders more terribly than Sinai itself against human sin. How it breaks men's hearts to hear its voice ! How it divides men from their sins, even as the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon and rends the rock in pieces ! If God smites the perfect One who bears our sin, how will he smite the guilty one who rejects his love ?

Let the cross speak again, and what does it say with even louder voice ? *God loves men, and delights in mercy.* Though he loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness, yet he loves the sons of men, so much so that he gives his only Begotten to die that sinners may live. What more could God have done to prove his love to mankind ? "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The love within that glorious deed needs no telling, it tells itself. God had but one Son, one with himself by mystic union, and he sent him here below to take our nature, that, being found in fashion as a man, he might die on our behalf, made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The word of the cross is, "God is love" ; he willeth not the death of the sinner, but that he turn unto him and live.

What next does the cross say ? Mark, we are not speaking of the crucifix. The crucifix represents Christ on the cross, but he is not on the cross any longer, he has finished his sacrificial work and has

ascended to his glory. If he were still on the cross he could not save us. We now preach the cross as that on which he died who now liveth and reigneth full of ability to save. Let the bare cross speak, and it declares that *the one sacrifice is accepted and the atonement is complete*. Sin is put away, the work of reconciliation is accomplished, and Jesus hath gone up on high unto his Father's throne to plead for the guilty. Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him: he is risen for our justification, and we are accepted in him.

"No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at his name,
And all the heavens adore."

Let the cross speak and it tells of ransom paid and atonement accepted. The law is magnified, justice is satisfied, mercy is no longer bound by the unsatisfied demands of judgment. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation," which also is the word of the cross.

When we let the cross speak still further we hear it say—*Come and welcome!* Guilty sons of men, come and welcome to the feast of mercy, for God hath both vindicated his law and displayed his love, and now for the chief of sinners there is free and full forgiveness to be had—to be had for nothing, for the cross gives priceless blessings without price: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Free pardon, free justification, perfect cleansing, complete salvation, these are gifts of grace bestowed upon the unworthy so soon as they believe in Christ Jesus and trust themselves with him. This is the word of the cross; what more can we desire to hear? We may be forgiven in a way which shall not violate the claims of justice. God is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth. He is merciful and just to forgive us our sins. Oh that I knew how to be quite still, and to let the cross itself speak out with its matchless tones of mercy and majesty, love and blood, death and life, punishment and pardon, suffering and glory. It speaks in thunder and in tenderness. If we will but listen to what it hath to say it is a word by which the inmost heart of God is revealed.

Now speak I yet further the word of the cross, for in the name of him that did hang upon the cross *I call for faith in his atonement*. The death of Christ was no ordinary matter: the dignity of his nature made it the event of the ages. He who died on the cross was very God of very God, as well as man, and his sacrifice is not to be neglected or rejected with impunity. Such a divine marvel demands our careful thought and joyful confidence. To do despite to the blood of the Son of God is to sin with a vengeance. God demands faith in his Son, and especially in his Son dying for our sakes. We ought to believe every word that God has spoken, but above all the word of the cross. Shall we doubt the good faith and love of God when he gives his Son a hostage for his word, and offers up the Only-begotten as the token of his grace! Oh, men, whatever ye trifle with, disregard not the Son of God! Whatever presumption ye commit, yet trample not upon the cross of Jesus.

This is the highest thought of God, the centre of all his counsels, the topmost summit of the mighty alp of divine lovingkindness. Do not think little of it or turn away from it. I beseech you, nay command you, in the name of him that liveth and was dead, look to the dying Saviour and live: if ye do not so ye shall answer for it in that day when he shall come upon the clouds of heaven to avenge him of his adversaries. Thus have I set before you the word of the cross; may the Holy Ghost bless the message.

II. We have the unpleasant task, in the second place, of listening to THE WORD OF ITS DESPISERS. They call the doctrine of the atonement "*foolishness.*" Numbers of men call the doctrine of salvation by the blood of Christ "*foolishness.*" It is most assuredly the wisdom of God, and the power of God, but they stick at the first assertion and will not acknowledge the wisdom of the wondrous plan, it is therefore no wonder that they never feel its power. No, it is foolishness to them; a thing beneath their contempt. And why foolishness? "Because," say they, "see how the common people take it up. Everybody can understand it. You believe that Jesus is a substitute for you, and you sing with the poorest of the poor—

‘ I do believe, I will believe
That Jesus died for me;
And on the cross he shed his blood
From sin to set me free.’

"There," say they, "that's a pretty ditty for educated men. Why, the very children sing it, and are able to believe it, and talk of it. Psha, it is sheer foolishness! We don't want anything so vulgar and commonplace. Don't you know that we take in a high-class review, and read the best thought of the times? You don't suppose we are going to believe just as common ploughboys and servant girls may do?" Ah me! How mighty wise some people think themselves! Is every truth which can be understood by simple minds to be thrown aside as foolishness? Is nothing worth knowing except the fancy thinking of the select portion of humanity? Are the well-known facts of nature foolishness because they are open to all? Is it quite certain that all the wisdom in the world dwells with the superfine gentlemen who sneer at everything and take in a review? These superficial readers of superior literature, are they the umpires of truth? I wish that their culture had taught them modesty. Those who glorify themselves and sneer at others are usually not wise, but otherwise; and those who call other people fools may be looking in the glass, and not out of the window. He who is truly wise has some respect for others, and the profoundest respect for the word of God.

But why is it that you count the gospel of the cross to be foolishness? It is this: because this religion of ours, this doctrine of the cross, is not the offspring of reason, but the gift of revelation. All the thinkers of the ages continued to think, but they never invented a plan of salvation in which divine justice and mercy should be equally conspicuous. The cross was not in all their thoughts. How could it be? As a thought it originated with the infinite mind, and could have originated nowhere else. The doctrine of the cross is not a speculation,

but a revelation : and for this reason the learned ones cannot endure it. It is God telling men something which they could not else have known, and this suits not the profound thinkers, who cannot bear to be told anything, but must needs excogitate everything, evolving it from their inner consciousness, or from the depths of their vast minds. Now, inasmuch as nothing can come out of a man that is not in him, and as the supreme love of God never was in such an unlovely thing as an unregenerate man, it happens that the doctrine of atonement never originated with man but was taught to him by God at the gates of Eden. The plan which blends vengeance and love, was never invented by human imagination. Since man has such an aversion to the great atonement, he could not have been the author of the idea, and he was not the author of it; God alone reveals it in language that babes may understand and therefore carnal pride calls it "foolishness."

Besides, the carnal man thinks it foolishness because it makes him out to be a fool, and you may take my word for it that anything which proves either you or me to be a fool will at once strike us as being very foolish. Our conscience is dull, and therefore we retaliate upon those who tell us unpleasant truth. "Why, am I nobody after all? I, bound in the best black cloth, and wearing a white cravat? So religious and so respectable, so thoughtful, so studious, so profound, am I to be nobody? Do you dare to say to me, 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom'! My dear sir, you cannot know what you are talking about. Why, I am a professor, a philosopher, a doctor of divinity, and therefore you cannot really mean that I am to receive truth as a little child! Such talk is foolishness." Of course they say so. We always reckoned that they would say so. I have rejoiced when I have read the sceptical papers, and have seen how they sneer at the old-fashioned gospel. The Bible said that carnal men could not receive spiritual things; how truthful is its statement! It is written, "There shall come in the last days scoffers." Here they are, hastening to prove by their conduct the things which they deny. One is grieved that any should scoff, and yet in a measure we are rejoiced to find such confirmation of truth from the lips of her enemies. As long as the world lasts ungodly men will despise a revelation which they are unable to understand; it is beyond their sphere, and therefore its preachers seem to be babblers and its doctrines to be foolishness.

But, in very deed, it may well seem foolishness to them, for it treats on subjects for which they have no care. If I were able to explain to a general audience how to make unlimited profit upon the Stock Exchange, or in some other market, all the world would listen with profound attention; and if I put my point clearly I should be pronounced a really clever preacher, a man well worth hearing; but when the sermon is only about the word of God, and eternity, and the soul, and the blood of Jesus—most people turn on their heel; they are not sure that they have souls, and they refuse to argue upon the supposition of a future existence, which is an old wife's fable to them. As for eternity their philosophy has no room for it, and they do not concern themselves about it. One said in argument the other day, "I believe I shall die like a dog." I could give him no better reply on the spur of the moment than to say, "If I had

known that you were a dog I would have brought you a bone." As I had the notion that he would live for ever I came to talk to him upon subjects suitable to an immortal being, but as I found out that he was going to die like a dog, what could I do for him but provide such cheer as the creature could enjoy? These men call the gospel foolishness because they look after the main chance, and care more for the body than for the soul. One of their wise men said, "Why do you preach so much about the world to come, why not preach about the world which now is? Teach these people how to ventilate their sewers, that is a much more needful matter than their believing on Jesus." Well, sanitary matters are important, and if any of you feel that you have nothing to live for but ventilating sewers I wish you would live at a great rate, and get it done as quickly as you can. Meanwhile, as we are convinced of the need of other things besides drainage, and as many of us expect soon to take our happy flight to a place where there are no sewers to ventilate, we shall look into those things which concern our future life, seeing they also fit us for the life which now is.

They call the word of the cross foolishness, because they regard all the truths with which it deals as insignificant trifles. "Soul!" say they, "what matters whether we have a soul or not? Sin—what is it but the blunder of a poor creature who knows no better?" Of all things, the eternal God is the greatest trifle to unbelieving men. It is merely a name to swear by, that is all. They admit that there may be a great master force in nature, or an energy co-extensive with the existence of matter, hence they allow Theism or Pantheism, but they will not endure a personal God whom they are bound to obey. Theism and pantheism are only masks for atheism. These men will have no personal God who loves them, and whom they love. God is a nonentity to them, and therefore when we speak of God as real, and sin as real, and heaven as real—and God knoweth they are the only real things—then straightway they mutter "Foolishness." As for us, we deplore their folly, and pray God to teach them better. Having entered by a new birth into the realm of spiritual things we know the reality and power of the word of the cross.

Now, brethren, I say of these gentlemen who pronounce the gospel foolishness that you need not take much notice of them, because they are not capable witnesses, they are not qualified to form a judgment upon the subject. I do not depreciate their abilities in other respects, but it is certain that a blind man is no judge of colours, a deaf man is no judge of sound, and a man who has never been quickened into spiritual life can have no judgment as to spiritual things. How can he? I, for instance, have felt the power of the gospel, and I assert that I have done so. Another man declares that I am not speaking the truth. Why not? Because he has not himself felt that power. Is that sound reasoning? Have you not heard of the Irishman who, when five men swore that they saw him commit a theft, made answer that he could produce fifty people who did *not* see him do it. Would there have been any force in that negative evidence? And what if all the world except two men should say, "We do not feel the power of the cross," would that be any evidence against the fact asserted by the two? I trow not. Two honest men who witness to a fact are to be believed,

even though twenty thousand persons are unable to bear such witness. The unspiritual are incapable witnesses; they put themselves out of court, for at the outset they assert that they are not cognizant of those things concerning which we bear testimony. Their assertion is that they never were the subjects of spiritual influences, and we quite believe what they say; but we do not believe them when they go further, and assert that therefore what we have seen, and tasted, and handled is all a delusion. Concerning that matter they are not capable witnesses.

And I beg you to notice that those who call the gospel of the cross folly are themselves, if rightly looked at, proofs of their own folly and of the sad results of unbelief. The Christians in Paul's days felt that the gospel had emancipated them from the bondage of idolatry and vice, and when they heard others that were captives under these delusions telling them that the emancipating force was foolishness, they looked at them, and smiled at the absurdity of the statement. They noticed that such men were themselves perishing. What a calamity it is for a man to be perishing! A house is unoccupied, its floor is untrdden, its hearth knows no genial glow. It suffers from neglect, it is perishing. Men who are not living to God are missing the end of their being, and like deserted houses are falling into ruin: they are perishing. While unoccupied by good, such minds are surrounded by powers of evil. Yonder is a tree, I have seen many such: around its trunk the ivy has twisted itself, grasping it like a huge python, and crushing it in its folds. The tree is perishing, its very life is being sucked out by the parasite that grasps it. Multitudes of men have about them lusts and sins, and errors that are eating out their life—they are perishing. Their souls and characters are as timber devoured by dry rot, it remains in the fabric of the house, but it is perishing. Ungodly men are devoured by their own pride, eaten up by self-confidence. Unbelieving men are comparable to a ship that is drifting to destruction: it has snapped its cable, it is nearing the rocks, it will be broken to pieces, it is perishing! Those that believe not in Jesus are drifting towards a sure immortality of misery, they are daily perishing; and yet while they perish, they condemn the means of rescue. Fancy drowning mariners mocking at the life-boat! Imagine a diseased man ridiculing the only remedy. That which we have tried and proved they call "foolishness": we have only to answer them, "Ye are yourselves, as ye remain captives to your sins, the victims of foolishness. Ye are yourselves, as ye waste your lives, as ye drift to destruction, proofs that the foolishness is not in the cross, but in you that reject it." The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to nobody else. O that their hearts were changed by the power of the word, then would they see all wisdom in the word of the cross.

III. We come, in the third place, to notice THE WORD OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE. What do they say of the cross? They call it *power*, the power of God. The more we study the gospel the more we are surprised at the singular display of wisdom which it contains; but we will not say much upon that point, for we are not qualified to be judges of wisdom. But we do say this, the word of the cross is power; it has been the power of God to us, it has worked upon us as nothing else has ever

done. Its work upon many of us has been so remarkable that even on-lookers must have been surprised at it.

The phenomenon of conversion is a fact. Men and women are totally changed, and the whole manner of their life is altered. It is of no use to deny the fact, for instances of it come before us every day; unbelievers become devout, the immoral become pure, the dishonest become upright, the blasphemous become gracious, the unchaste become holy. Evil ways are on a sudden deserted, and penitents struggle towards virtue. We see persons in all ranks of society undergoing a radical transformation,—self-satisfied people are humbled by the discovery of their unworthiness, and others who were steeped in immorality renounce their vicious pleasures and seek happiness in the service of God. How do you account for this? We who are the subjects of such a change account for it in this way,—it is wrought by the doctrine of the cross, and the power which accomplishes the change is the power of God. No force less than divine could have effected so great a change. The word of the cross has delivered us from the love of sin: no sin is now our master, we have broken every fetter of evil habit. We fall into sin, but we mourn over it, and hate the sin, and hate ourselves for committing it. We have been clean delivered from the bondage of corruption, and made free to serve the Lord. We have also been delivered from the dread which once bowed us down, a horrible dread which held us in bondage, and made us tremble before our Father and our friend. We thought hardly of God and fled from him; from this we are now delivered, for now we love him and delight in him, and the nearer we can approach him the happier we are.

We have been delivered, also, from the power of Satan. That evil prince has great power over men, and once we were led captive at his will. Even now he attacks us, but we overcome him through the blood of the Lamb. We are also daily delivered from self and from the world, and from all things that would enthral us. We are being saved; yea, we are saved. Every day a saving force is operating upon us to set us free from the thralldom of corruption. This we feel and know. We are bound for the kingdom, and nothing can keep us back: we are bound for purity, for ultimate perfection: we feel eternal life within us, urging us upward and onward, beyond ourselves and our surroundings. We sit here like eagles, chained to the rock by the feebleness of our bodies, but the aspiration within us tells us that we are born to soar among pure and glorified spirits. We feel that heaven is born within us,—born by the word of the cross through the Spirit. We could tell the histories of some here present, or, better still, they could tell them themselves, histories of changes sudden but complete, marvellous-but enduring, changes from darkness to light, from death to life. How gladly could we detain you with details of our being upheld when our temptations have been almost overwhelming, and kept pressing forward in Christ's service when we had been altogether without strength had not the word of the cross poured new energy into us. We have been ready to die in despair until we have looked to the cross, and then the clouds have yielded to clear shining. A sight of the bleeding Saviour, and a touch of his hand have made us men again, and we have lifted

up our heads as from among the dead. Under the power of the cross we still advance from strength to strength: there is power in the word of the cross to make a man grow into something nobler than he ever dreamed of. We shall not know what we shall be till we shall see our Lord and Saviour as he is.

Why, brethren, the power with which God created the world was no greater than the power with which he made us new men in Christ Jesus. The power with which he sustains the world is not greater than the power by which he sustains his people under trial and temptation; and even the raising of the dead at the end of the world will be no greater display of divine power than the raising of dead souls out of their spiritual graves. These wonders of power are being performed in our own experience every day of the week, entirely through the cross. I appeal to you who are truly converted, were you converted through the wisdom of man? I appeal to you that are kept from sinning, are you led towards holiness by the power of elocution, of rhetoric, or of logic? I appeal to you who are despairing, are you ever revived by musical words and rhythmical sentences? Or do you owe all to Jesus crucified? What is your life, my brethren, but the cross? Whence comes the bread of your soul but from the cross? What is your joy but the cross? What is your delight, what is your heaven, but the Blessed One, once crucified for you, who ever liveth to make intercession for you? Cling to the cross, then. Put both arms around it! Hold to the Crucified, and never let him go. Come afresh to the cross at this moment, and rest there now and for ever! Then, with the power of God resting upon you, go forth and preach the cross! Tell out the story of the bleeding Lamb. Repeat the wondrous tale, and nothing else. Never mind how you do it, only proclaim that Jesus died for sinners. The cross held up by a babe's hand is just as powerful as if a giant held it up. The power lies in the word itself, or rather in the Holy Spirit who works by it and with it.

Brethren, believe in the power of the cross for the conversion of those around you. Do not say of any man that he cannot be saved. The blood of Jesus is omnipotent. Do not say of any district that it is too sunken, or of any class of men that they are too far gone: the word of the cross reclaims the lost. Believe it to be the power of God, and you shall find it so. Believe in Christ crucified, and preach boldly in his name, and you shall see great things and gladsome things. Do not doubt the ultimate triumph of Christianity. Do not let a mistrust flit across your soul. The cross must conquer; it must blossom with a crown, a crown commensurate with the person of the Crucified, and the bitterness of his agony. His reward shall parallel his sorrows. Trust in God, and lift your banner high, and now with psalms and songs advance to battle, for the Lord of hosts is with us, the Son of the Highest leads our van. Onward, with blast of silver trumpet and shout of those that seize the spoil. Let no man's heart fail him! Christ hath died! Atonement is complete! God is satisfied! Peace is proclaimed! Heaven glitters with proofs of mercy already bestowed upon ten thousand times ten thousand! Hell is trembling, heaven adoring, earth waiting. Advance, ye saints, to certain victory! You shall overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MINSTREL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 7TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

THE text is a somewhat singular one, but I hope it will suggest a profitable idea.

"But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."—2 Kings iii. 15.

Elisha needed that the Holy Spirit should come upon him to inspire him with prophetic utterances. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." We need that the hand of the Lord should be laid upon us, for we can never open our mouths in wisdom except we are under the divine touch. Now, the Spirit of God works according to his own will. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and the Spirit of God operates as he chooseth. Elisha could not prophesy just when he liked; he must wait until the Spirit of God came upon him, and the Spirit of God could come or not even as he pleased. Elisha had noticed that the Spirit of God acted upon him most freely when his mind was restful and subdued. He found himself best prepared for the heavenly voice when the noise within his soul was hushed, and every disturbing emotion was quieted. Having ascertained this fact by observation he acted upon it. He could not create the wind of the Spirit, but he could set his sail to receive it, and he did so.

At the particular time alluded to in the text Elisha had been greatly irritated by the sight of Jehoram, the king of Israel, the son of Ahab and Jezebel. In the true spirit of his old master, Elijah, the prophet let Jehoram know what he thought of him; and having delivered his soul, he very naturally felt agitated and distressed, and unfit to be the mouthpiece for the Spirit of God. He knew that the hand of the Lord would not rest upon him while he was in that state, and therefore he said, "Bring me a minstrel." The original Hebrew conveys the idea of a man accustomed to play upon the harp. Listening to the dulcet tones which were produced by a skilful harper, who very likely sang one of David's psalms to the music, the prophet waited awhile, and then the hand of the Lord came upon him. Under the influence of minstrelsy his mind grew quiet, his agitation subsided, his thoughts were collected, and the Spirit of God spake through him. It was a

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most commendable thing for him to use the means which he had found at other times helpful, though still his sole reliance was upon the hand of the Lord. It would seem from a passage in the First Book of Samuel that Elisha was not the only prophet who had found music helpful, for we read, "Thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy." Elisha, like his predecessors, only used a natural means for putting himself into readiness for receiving supernatural help.

Let us see if we can bring forth the practical lesson which this incident may teach us.

I. First: here is a lesson to those who wish to serve God, and to speak in his name. **LET US STRIVE TO BE IN A FIT STATE FOR THE LORD'S WORK.** If we know of anything that will put our mind into such a condition that the Spirit of God is likely to work upon us and speak through us, let us make use of it. Elisha cried, "Bring me a minstrel"; let us also say—bring me that which will be helpful to me. The harper could be of no service to Elisha for bringing him inspiration; but by putting him into a calm, equable state of mind he prepared him for the heavenly communication, and removed from his soul that which would have hindered the divine working.

It is very evident that we, too, like the prophet, have *our hindrances*. We are at times unfit for the Master's use. Our minds are disarranged, the machinery is out of order, the sail is furled, the pipe is blocked up, the whole soul is out of gear. The hindrance in Elisha's case came from *his surroundings*. He was in a camp; a camp where three nations mixed their discordant voices; a noisy, ill-disciplined camp, and a camp ready to perish for thirst. There was no water, and the men-at-arms were perishing; the confusion and clamour must have been great. Prophetic thought could scarcely command itself amid the uproar, the discontent, the threatening from thousands of thirsty men. Three kings had waited on the prophet; but this would not have disconcerted him had not one of them been Jehoram, the son of Ahab, and Jezebel. What memories were awakened in the mind of Elijah's servant by the sight of the man in whom the proud dame of Sidon and her base-minded consort lived again. Naboth's vineyard must have come to his mind, and the stern threat of Elijah—"The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." "For there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up."

Elisha acted rightly, and bravely. When he saw Jehoram coming to him for help, he challenged him thus—"What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother." When the king humbly and with bated breath confessed that he saw the hand of Jehovah in bringing the three kings together, the prophet scarcely moderated his tone, but exclaimed, "As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee." It was fit that he should be in that temper; the occasion demanded it. Still it was not a fit preface to the inward whisper of the Spirit of God, and the prophet did not feel ready for his work:

the circumstances were not soothing or elevating, and so he said, "Bring me a minstrel." Do you not occasionally find yourself in an unhappy position? You have to preach, or to teach a class in school, or to carry an edifying word to a sick person; but everything distracts you. What with noise, or domestic trouble, or sinful neighbours, or the railing words of some wicked man, you cannot get into a fit frame of mind. You have had a duty to do which has caused you much pain and disquietude, and you cannot get over it, for everything conspires to worry you. Little things grieve great minds. The very sight of some individuals will throw a preacher off the rails. I know that the height of the pulpit, the thinness of the audience, the sleepiness of a hearer, or the heaviness of the atmosphere, may put the preacher's heart out of tune, and incapacitate him for the blessing. Yes, we have our hindrances even as Elisha had.

Elisha's hindrances lay mainly in *his inward feelings*: he could not feel the hand of the Lord upon him until the inner warfare had been pacified. He burned with indignation at the sight of the son of Jezebel, and flashed words of flame into his face, and, as I have already said, he was justified in so doing; but still the excitement marred the holy peace in which he usually lived, and he did not feel in a right condition to speak in the name of the Lord. Anger, even if it be of the purest kind, is a great disturber of the heart; it ruffles all our garments, and makes us unfit to minister before the Lord. I know of nothing that is more likely to put a man out of order for the communications of the Spirit of God than indignation. Even though we may be able to say, "I do well to be angry," yet it is a very trying emotion. The unruffled lake reflects the skies, but if it be tossed with tempest even the purest water becomes a broken mirror; even thus in the quiet of the soul the thoughts of God's Spirit are reflected, while in the rush of indignation they are broken and confused.

Doubtless, also, the prophet's spirits were depressed. He saw before him the king of Edom, an idolater; the king of Israel, a votary of the calves of Jeroboam; and Jehoshaphat, the man of God, in confederacy with them. This last must have pained him as much as anything. What hope was there for the cause of truth and holiness when even a godly prince was in alliance with Jezebel's son? This burdened the heart of the man of God. Everything was wrong, and going worse and worse. The warnings of Elijah and his own teachings seemed to go for nothing; the honour of God was forgotten, and the cause of evil triumphed.

Moreover, the servant of God must have been the subject of a fierce internal conflict between two sets of thoughts. Indignation and pity strove within his heart. His justice and his piety made him feel that he could have nothing to do with two idolatrous kings; but pity and humanity made him wish to deliver the army from perishing by thirst. Like a patriot, he sympathized with his people; but, like a prophet, he was jealous for his God. The men of Judah and Israel, whatever they might be in character, were the Lord's people by covenant; he could not let them die: yet they had broken that covenant, and how could he help them? The prophet was perplexed, and his heart grew heavy. How can we do the Lord's work when we are cast down in spirit? The

joy of the Lord is our strength, and when we lose it our hands are feeble. When the heart is torn with inner conflict how can we speak words of comfort to those who are weary? We have need to escape from this inward strife before we can become sons of consolation to others. While rent with conflicting feeling, there was no rest in the prophet's spirit; and the hand of the Lord did not come upon him. Most wisely he did not attempt to speak in the name of the Lord, but sought for a means by which his excitement could be allayed. In the face of many hindrances we shall be wise if we imitate him. When we feel ourselves cumbered with much serving we shall act discreetly if we pause in it, and take Mary's place, for awhile, at least, and sit at Jesus' feet; or, if the service must be done at once, it will be well to use the readiest means for preparing the mind for doing it. It may be that some simple natural means will be helpful, and, if so, we must not be so ultra-spiritual as to disdain to cry, "Bring me a minstrel." It is often pride which makes us decline the use of natural means. David went against Goliath in the name of the Lord, but he took his sling and his stone with him; even our Lord, who could open men's eyes with a word, did not refuse to use clay, or to send his patient to the pool of Siloam to wash. If you and I are out of order we must do our best to get right. If I go to do the Lord's work with a vexed or distracted mind, I shall do it badly. Perhaps I shall do more harm than good. I shall spill the cup of consolation if I am all in a tremble myself. God's servants should serve their Master well: the best we can render falls short of his deservings; but it would be a pity to do less than our very best. Occasionally we are quite out of form, we cannot think, or feel, or speak aright; we have to confess that we are all in confusion, and, what is worse, we dare not even expect God to come and help us till we are in a less excited condition. I know what I mean better than I can tell you. Some of our brethren are always even and calm, but others of us go dangerously up and sadly down, and are at times unfit either to receive the heavenly word or to convey it to others. At such times let us remember our text. The prophet said, "Bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him."

But what are our *helps* when we are pressed with hindrances? Is there anything which in our case may be as useful as a harp? "Bring me a minstrel," said the prophet, for his mind was easily moved by that charming art. Music and song soothed and calmed, and cheered him.

"Through every pulse the music stole,
And held high converse with his soul."

On the wings of melody his mind rose above the noisy camp, and floated far away from the loathed presence of Jehoram; the melting mystic strain laid all his passions asleep, and his soul was left in silence to hear the voice of the Lord. Well did Luther say, "Music is the art of the prophets, the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us."

Among our own helps *singing* holds a chief place; as saith the apostle, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual

songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Note how he connects it with peace in his epistle to the Colossians: "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts . . . teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." "I cannot sing," says one. You need not sing as sweetly as Asaph and Heman, and other sweet birds of paradise whose names we read in Scripture; but we should all sing better if we sang more. Those with cracked voices would be kind if they would not sing quite so loudly in the congregation, for they grievously disturb other people; but they might get alone and have good times with themselves, where nobody could complain of their strong voices and lusty tones. It is good to sing praises unto the Lord, and a part of its goodness lies in the comfort which it brings. It is not without significance, that after supper, before our Lord went to his great sacrifice, he sang a hymn. Did not even he find refreshment in that holy exercise? My mind dwells sweetly on a season which I have often mentioned to you when a new lie had been forged against me, a lie of peculiar bitterness, and it vexed me. I was never particularly pleased at being slandered, though I have had my fair share of it. Well, I went alone awhile, and sung over to myself in my own poor way,—

"If on my face, for thy dear name,
Shame and reproaches be,
I'll hail reproach, and welcome shame,
If thou remember me."

By that means the sting was removed, and I felt merry again. "Bring me a minstrel:" the restoring means may be a little thing, but if you do not look to the linchpin of a cartwheel the wheel may come off, and down will go the cart, and what is the poor horse to do then? If you can get your mind right again by such a simple thing as singing, pray do not neglect it.

Suppose, however, that singing has no such power over you; let me recommend to you the quiet *reading* of a chapter of God's word. Go upstairs and open the Book, and think upon a few verses. If you are much perplexed, read that blessed chapter which begins, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Those verses act like a charm upon many minds: many and many a time a storm has subsided into a calm by the reading of those words. Some such passage read quietly will often operate as the harper acted upon Elisha. If time be pressing, see what is the text for the day in the almanack; or choose out some one precious promise which in other days was sweet to you. It is wonderful the effect of a single verse of Scripture when the Spirit of God applies it to the soul. There is music to a miser in the jingling of his money bag: but what music can equal this—"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"? If you are in poverty, what melody lies in this: "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." What power would come upon the soul to calm and quiet it, and make it ready for the hand of God, if we would grasp a single line of Scripture and suck the honey out of it till our soul is filled with sweetness.

You will find it equal to bringing a minstrel, and perhaps even more efficient, if you will get alone to *pray*. That horrible Rabshakeh's letter—you read it, and then you wished you had never seen it. You put it behind the glass, but you fetch it out again, and read it again, and cry, "What a trial is this! who can bear it?" There is a kind of basilisk power in an abominable letter, so that you feel compelled to read it again and again. Can you not break the spell? What is the wisest course? Go upstairs, open it wide, spread it before the Lord, and say, "O Lord, thou hast seen letters like this before; for thy servant Hezekiah showed thee one." I would say of every sorrow, "Pray over it." An old divine, after he had heard a young minister preach a poor discourse, said to him, "Sir, I beg you to try and pray that sermon over." He replied that he could not pray it over. Now, a sermon that cannot be prayed over ought never to be preached at all, and a trouble that you cannot pray over is a trouble which you ought not to have. It must be a grief of your own making; it cannot be a trial of God's sending. Tell the Lord your affliction, and the bitterness of it will be past, and you will go back to your daily service calm and quiet, fitted for the hand of the Lord to be laid upon you. Men will wonder whence your joy has come, and what makes your face to shine. The secret is that you have waited on the Lord, and renewed your strength.

It may be you will find fittest help in *Christian association*. I commend this to those believers who are seldom fit for God to use because they are morose and fault-finding. You ought to say, "Bring me a minstrel:"—find me some praying sister whom I may talk with, or find me some genial brother who rejoices in the Lord, and let me converse with such." It may be that the Master will join you and make a third, and then shall your heart be glad. Much misery is caused by Christians attempting to go to heaven alone. You remember how Mr. Bunyan describes Christian as journeying alone at first; he soon picked up with Hopeful, and then he was more cheery. As for Christiana and Mercy, and the family, they scarcely could have gone on pilgrimage at all if it had not been for Mr. Greatheart: but when they all went in company, with Mr. Greatheart to lead the band, they could sing all the way to the gates of the Celestial City. You, my friend, who are hindered in the service of Christ, might often be put right, so that God could use you, if you would become a companion of all them that fear God, and of them that keep his precepts. Holy converse acts as a minstrel to the spirit.

What is *the duty* that arises out of this? It is this: if you get into a bad state, don't stick there. "Ah," says one, "it is very close weather, and I feel depressed, so that the Spirit of God does not work upon my mind." Then cry at once, "Bring me a minstrel." Do not say "I cannot help being stupid." You need not be: at least, not more so than you are by nature. You may get out of your dullness by making an effort, and you ought to make it. Did I not hear you say, "Everybody has gone away for a holiday, and I cannot leave my work. Trade is dull, and so am I"? But you need not be dull. Why should you always be heavy? You say, "I do not feel fit to go to my class," or, "I do not feel fit to preach." Should you, therefore, cease from the work of the

Lord? By no means. Rouse yourself. Think of the way in which God has aforetime helped you, and use the same means again. While you are helping yourselves God will help you, and the hand of the Lord will come upon you.

Do not give way to feelings which unhinge you. Fight against them and cry with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Still, do not rush into God's service in an unfit condition. Resort to such means as are within reach for calming the lower faculties, and then the Spirit of God will move upon your higher powers. Act rationally. Use your best judgment and most prudent endeavours, or we shall suspect that you have no particular wish to do the Lord's work, or fancy that anything is good enough for your God. Say to yourself, "Being in an unsuitable condition, I cannot expect God to use me. I must therefore get right. Here is my harp, but every string is out of tune. I cannot expect the Holy Spirit to play upon it until it is put in order. What can I do to help myself in this matter, for that I will do, and thus prove the sincerity of my prayer when I ask God the Holy Spirit to help me."

This, then, is the first lesson, and I am sure there is real practical teaching in it, though some superior persons may despise it.

II. My second word is to those who have not yet found the Lord. WE SHOULD USE EVERY MEANS TO OBTAIN THE TOUCH OF THE DIVINE HAND. There are some here present who do not yet know whether they are believers in Christ or not: and I am sure I cannot tell them. I hope they are believers, for they are sincerely desirous of eternal salvation, but sometimes I am afraid they are not, for they do not appear to understand the meaning of the finished work of Christ. What are those, who are earnestly seeking the Lord, to do? There is but one answer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Faith is the one and only course commanded. But some one replies, "Alas, I cannot get at that." But, my friend, you must get at it, or perish. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

Still, to help you, let me urge you to do this which lies near at hand: if you cannot feel that the Spirit of God will bless you as you are, call for some minstrel, who may aid you in your search after the blessing. If there be any subordinate means which may be helpful, use it with a view to the higher and better thing. I would first say—If you feel that you have not the faith which you ought to have, *use what faith you have*. It is wonderful what an immense amount of possibility lies in a mustard seed of faith. It is a very small, tiny thing; but sow it, and it will grow. You have not enough faith to believe that Christ *will* save you, but you have enough to feel sure that Christ *can* save you. That is something: hold to it and follow it out to its fair conclusions. If a man has not money enough to pay for a week's provisions, let him not starve; but let him spend what he has, hoping that more will come. Have you a small dust of faith? use that, and it will multiply.

If you want to feel the hand of the Lord, I would next say, Go and *hear a sound, earnest, lively preacher*. I am advising you to do as I acted myself. I was muddled, and could not exercise faith, and so I resolved to obey that other precept, "Hear, and your soul shall live"

If you long for faith, listen to the preacher who preaches the gospel most simply and most forcibly. Perhaps you say, "I have been listening to a very clever minister, a very intellectual minister, and his word has never been blessed to my soul." Then shift your place, and say, "Bring me a minstrel;" for then it may be that the hand of the Lord may be upon you. It is better to go a hundred miles to hear a faithful minister than to listen to a man from whom you get no good because he happens to preach near you. Men go many miles to a skilful physician, or a healing fountain. When we are in earnest to find Christ we shall have the sense to go where he is most honoured and most spoken of.

"But suppose I have attended such a ministry, and have found no good; what shall I do? Why, the Scripture says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Still, if you cannot get at this for the moment, *attend earnest meetings* where souls have been converted, and many have been brought to Jesus' feet. Trust not to preachers or meetings; but, still, go where the rain is falling, and there may be a drop for you. If a ministry is blessing others, resort to it, praying, "O Lord, *bless me.*" Our immediate need is the hand of the Lord, and we may be made ready to receive it by hearing the gospel; therefore let us diligently incline our ear to the heavenly word.

Let me also advise you to *read gracious books.* Ask Christian people what writings were blessed to their conversion, and carefully study the same. There is no book for saving souls like the Bible. Say, "Bring me a minstrel," and read the Scriptures again and again. The Lord Jesus feedeth among the lilies: get among the beds of lilies, and you will find him there. Oh, how many have found Christ when they have been searching the Scriptures to see "whether those things were so."

I would also strongly recommend you to *get a good deal alone.* You poor souls, who cannot find Christ, and do not seem to understand what it is to believe in him, should think much, and meditate much, upon Jesus and his cross. David said, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." If you want a minstrel, think of your sin, your sin against your God, till it breaks your heart; then think of Christ, his nature, his work, his love, his deeds of mercy: think of the Holy Spirit, and his power to renew, regenerate, comfort, sanctify: think over those precious truths of the word of God, which are set there on purpose to be beacons to light souls to Christ, and while you are thinking of these it shall be to you as when the minstrel played, and the hand of the Lord came upon his prophet. Get much alone; but still recollect there is no hope for you if you trust in being alone, or trust in reading the Scriptures, or trust in hearing, or trust in anything but Christ. What you want is the hand of Jesus laid upon you: one touch from him, and you will be made whole. If you can but touch the hem of his garment, virtue shall come out of him to you. I am merely mentioning these things because sometimes they lead up to the one thing, and when a man is in earnest to obtain the one thing needful, he will be willing to attend to anything by which he will be likely to attain it, and to attend to any secondary means which God has blessed in the case of others. He will be willing to be taught by a child, if peradventure God will bless him in that manner. He will say, "Bring me a minstrel;" "Bring me a good book;" "Bring me a

godly minister ; ” “ Bring me a Christian man accustomed to speak to troubled hearts ; ” “ Bring me an aged Christian whose testimony shall confirm my spirit, and be the means of working faith in me : for I must get to God ; I must get salvation. Tell me, tell me, where Christ is to be obtained, and I will find him if I ransack the globe to discover him.” I do not believe any person who has desires to find Christ will seek in vain. I am certain that when people hunger and thirst after Christ they shall be filled, and when they say, “ We will do anything by which we may be led to Jesus,” they are not far from the kingdom of heaven, and the Holy Spirit is at work in them.

III. Thirdly, WE SHOULD MORE ABUNDANTLY USE HOLY MINSTRELSY. Saints and sinners, too, would find it greatly to their benefit if they said, “ Bring me a minstrel.” This is the world’s cry whenever it is merry, and filled with wine. The art of music has been prostituted to the service of Satan. Charles Wesley well said,—

“ Listed into the cause of sin,
 Why should a good be evil ?
 Music, alas ! too long has been
 Press’d to obey the devil.
 Drunken, or lewd, or light, the lay
 Flow’d to the soul’s undoing ;
 Widen’d, and strew’d with flowers the way
 Down to eternal ruin.”

It is for us to use singing in the service of God, and to make a conquest of it for our Redeemer. Worldlings want the minstrel to excite them ; we want him to calm our hearts and still our spirits. That is his use to us, and we shall do well to employ the harper to that end.

Let us give instances : I will suppose that this morning you were thinking about coming up to the assembly of God’s people, and you felt hardly up to the mark. It would have been wise to do as I did this morning. I read at family prayer the eighty-fourth Psalm, “ How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts ! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord : my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.”

What a sweet piece of Sabbath minstrelsy it is ! How often have we been quieted and prepared for sanctuary worship by Psalm cxxii :—

“ How did my heart rejoice to hear
 My friends devoutly say,
 ‘ In Zion let us all appear
 And keep thy holy day ! ’ ”

When the house is full of trouble, and your heart is bowed down, is it not well to say—“ Bring me a minstrel, and let him sing to me the twenty-seventh Psalm. ‘ The Lord is my light and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? the Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear : though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.’ ” You need not confine the

harper to that one strain ; for David has written many psalms for burdened hearts. It is wonderful what provision God has made of sacred minstrels to play us up out of the depths into the heights if we will but make a right use of them.

I will suppose you are in a state of alarm ; it may be there is a thunderstorm, or possibly a disease is stalking through the land. Did you ever sing in such times that forty-sixth Psalm : " God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her ; she shall not be moved : God shall help her, and that right early." Such music is like the breath of heaven. How comforting are the words of the ninety-first Psalm when diseases are abroad, or when the thunder rolls through the sky : " He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress : my God ; in him will I trust." I remember being in a family one night when I was but a lad, when everybody in the house, strong men though some of them were, trembled and were afraid. A child was upstairs and must be brought down ; but no one dared to pass by the window on the staircase. Well do I remember fetching down the child, awed but not alarmed, and then I sat down and read aloud the ninety-first Psalm, and saw how it quieted both men and women. Ah, my brethren, David as a musician is one of a thousand ; we need no other minstrel. The word of God hushes the tempest of the soul, and refreshes the heart with a celestial dew. " Bring me a minstrel," but let him sing us one of the songs of Zion.

Do you ever get depressed in spirit, beloved friends ? I fear you do ; and are you ever troubled because you seem to have more affliction than anybody else ? Have you watched the wicked and seen them prosperously sailing while you have been tossed to and fro on a raging sea of troubles ? Do you want to get peace to your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit ? Then say, " Bring me a minstrel ;" and let him sing that thirty-seventh Psalm, " Fret not thyself because of evildoers." Or if you would have a change from the thirty-seventh, turn the figures round, and let him sing the seventy-third, and the notes will run thus : " Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone ; my steps had well nigh slipped." You will not be long before you will rise to the note—" Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth : but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Happily, you are not always depressed : there are times of great joy with you, and then you long to have communion with God. If you wish to have fellowship with Jesus, you will find it helpful to say, " Bring me a minstrel ;" and when he asks, " What shall I sing ?" say to him, " Sing the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's." Then shall you find utterance for your heart in some such canticles as these : " Tell me,

O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Possibly your tongue will take up notes like these: "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies. Until the daybreak, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of division." The whole book is full of utterances which may seem strange to worldly minds, but which exactly suit those who know the Well-beloved. Read that third verse of the eighth chapter of the Song. Did you ever sing it? "His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me. I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please." "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

When we come to die we will breathe our last breath to music. Then will we say, "Bring me a harper," and like Jacob and Moses we will sing ere we depart. Our song is ready. It is the twenty-third Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

This is the kind of minstrel for me. Say you not so, my brethren? When you are in trouble or distress, will you not remember your songs in the night? If such be the strain, I am of the same mind as Martin Luther, whose words I have copied out to read to you. His language is always strong. Luther speaks thunderbolts. "One of the finest and noblest gifts of God is music. This is very hateful to the devil, and with it we may drive off temptations and evil thoughts. After theology I give the next place and highest honour to music. It has often aroused and moved me so that I have won a desire to preach. We ought not to ordain young men to the office of preacher if they have not trained themselves and practised singing in the schools." That is pretty strong. I fear many would not have been preachers if they must first have been singers. Still, there is a power about song; and to sing the praises of God in psalms such as those I have read to you is most consoling.

Suppose you have done with the minstrelsy which I have now mentioned, there is next *the music of gospel doctrine*, I confess to you that, when depressed in spirit, I love a bit of thorough Calvinistic doctrine. I turn to Coles on Divine Sovereignty, and relish his plain speaking upon sovereign grace. The doctrine of election is noble music: predestination is a glorious hallelujah. Grace abounding, love victorious, truth unchanging, faithfulness invincible: these are melodies such as my ear delights in. The truth of God is fit music for angels. The harps of the redeemed never resound with more noble music than the doctrines of grace. Every truth has its melody, every doctrine is a psalm unto God. When my heart is faint, "Bring me a minstrel," and let him sing of free grace and dying love.

If these do not charm you, fetch a minstrel from *experience*. Think how God has dealt with you in times of sorrow and darkness long gone by, and then you will sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." That one hundred and third Psalm might last a man from now till he entered heaven, he need not change the strain,—“Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name.” He may keep on chanting it until his song melts into the hymn of the angels, and he adds another voice to the chorus of the redeemed above.

If you want music, there is yet a sweeter store. Go fetch a minstrel from *Calvary*. Commend me for sweetness to the music of the cross. At Calvary I hear one piece of music set to the minor key, which has bred more joy beneath the skies than all else. Hear it : “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Jesus deserted is the comfort of deserted souls : Jesus crying, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” is the joy of the spirit that has lost the light of God’s countenance. That grave and solemn note can lift despair into delight.

But if you want another hymn of the cross to be sung with the accompaniment of the high-sounding cymbals, or with trumpet and sound of cornet, let me commend you to this other song of the cross, “IT IS FINISHED.” All music lies there. Condensed into those three words you have the harmonies of eternity, the melodies of the infinite. Angels themselves when on their loftiest key did never sing a canticle so sweet. “*Consummatum est*” is the consummation of song. “It is finished”; sin is blotted out, reconciliation is complete, everlasting righteousness is brought in, and believing souls are saved. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Till the day break, and the shadows flee away, “Bring me a minstrel,” and let us sing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm cxxvi.;
2 Kings iii. 1—15.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136 (Song II.), 166, 229.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SHUT IN OR SHUT OUT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“The Lord shut him in.”—Genesis vii. 16.

NOAH was a very different man from the rest of those who lived in his time, for the grace of God had set a division between him and them. *They* forgot God, and *he* feared him; they lived for things seen and temporal, and he lived in sight of the invisible. When he was building his ark he was in a miserable minority, as men count heads: and, even after one hundred and twenty years' ministry, when his ark was builded and his family entered it, they were eight against many millions, an insignificant few, as men would say; a pitiful sect among mankind. Who could imagine that the eight would be right and all the millions wrong? Where God is, there is the majority. But very clearly there was a very marked distinction between Noah and his household, and all the rest of mankind. Yet, great as that distinction was, throughout one hundred and twenty years there was no impassable gulf between the two parties. Although Noah could not, would not go to them, yet they that would might pass to him; if they would hear, believe, and obey, they, too, might be amongst the company whom God had blessed, and whom he would surely preserve from destruction. Yea, when the one hundred and twenty years were over, and God's Spirit would no longer strive with men, there stood the great ark with its vast door wide open, and still Noah continued to preach and to declare that all who would pass within that open portal into the ark of safety should be preserved from the coming destruction. Outside that door death would reign universally, but all would be peace within.

When the last seven days of grace had come to a close the Lord began his work of justice by separating Noah, and “the Lord shut him in.” Then there was a more marked difference between Noah and the rest of mankind. He that openeth and no man shutteth, he that shutteth and no man openeth, even he had interposed a barrier impassable between Noah and those that believed not. Mercy's gate was shut, the time of long suffering had come to a close.

Brethren, the Church of God stands at the present moment in the world very much in the same condition as Noah and his family. Still

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is the door of the ark wide open, and it is our business with all our might to persuade, constrain, compel men to come in. Not without success have our entreaties been; for many have entered the ark of salvation which is found in the person of our divine Lord Jesus. These make up with us the chosen family of God who shall be safe when the world is deluged with the last devouring fire. But the time cometh, it comes to each man in death, and it will come to the whole company of the ungodly in the day when the Lord Jesus shall descend from heaven with a shout, that the door shall be shut, and it shall be said, "Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Character will become unchangeable; he that is unjust will be unjust still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still.

My heart trembles as I think of this matter. There is a joy in being shut in with the saints, but a great grief in knowing that many will be shut out. I shall labour so to set forth this truth that, mayhap, ere the door closes a goodly company may cry, "We will come with you, for we perceive that the Lord is with you." Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto the Lord; but until those water-floods break forth they may come, and they shall find a glad welcome; for it is written "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Our meditation will be arranged under two heads, which may readily be remembered: *shut in* and *shut out*. They stand in very distinct contrast, and admit of no third condition.

I. First, let us think of truths which range themselves under the head of SHUT IN. This is a blessed text. Oh that the Spirit of God may help me to preach from it, and you to enjoy it.

Observe, then, that Noah was *shut in*—shut in the ark. Noah's condition as to an evil world was now one of permanent separation. He was severed from the world, and his separation was beyond recall. There is a time in the human character when it has some good thing in it towards the Lord God of Israel, and yet that good thing may be lost; but there is another and happier time when the truly converted have stepped over the boundary, and shall never go back again unto corruption. They are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God; hidden beyond further damage or death. They are henceforth kept by the power of God unto salvation; crucified unto the world and the world unto them. There was a time when, speaking after the manner of men, Noah might have given up his testimony and sided with the ungodly mass; but that possibility is all over; for the door is shut, the Lord hath shut him in. There was no wish in Noah's heart to come out, and he could not come out. The deed was done, and could not be undone: the bolt was turned and could not be withdrawn. Noah was shut in by a hand which is not given to undo its own work. I believe that this fixity of character and condition has happened to all believers who can truly say that they are dead unto the world. Dying unto the world is the way of our salvation; by this process we pass into newness of life. I dare say when that door was shut the men of the world said, "Look at old Noah! he has gone into his coffin. He is as good as dead and buried." Yes, that was exactly what they were meant to see and to say; and Peter says, "The like figure whereunto also baptism doth

now save us." He does not say that baptism saves us ; but that it is a "like figure" of the way of salvation. The ark and immersion set forth the same truth. The man is "buried in baptism," to signify that he is dead to the world ; wherein also he rises again to show his fellowship with Christ in resurrection, and the fact that he has risen to newness of life. Baptism is a picture of the way of salvation, just as Noah's ark was. Entrance into the ark and submergence beneath a forty days' deluge of rain, was a fit type of death and burial ; and the rising of the ark above the waters fitly sets forth resurrection to a new life. Noah underwent burial to all the old things that he might come out into a new world, and even so we die in Christ that we may live with him. This is the doctrine, but the experience is grand. Beloved, it is a great mercy when a man can feel in his own soul that God has fixed for ever his condition towards the ungodly. We have come out, my brethren, from among men just as Abraham did when he left his fatherland and went into the land of which he knew nothing but that God had said that he would give it to him and to his seed. It is written concerning Abraham and the other patriarchs that "doubtless if they had been mindful of the place whence they came out, they had opportunity to return," but they did not return, it entered not into their minds and hearts to do so. They had as fully left Padanaram behind them as if they had been dead and buried to it, and their life showed each one of them to be a pilgrim and a sojourner with God. Even so with believers, the Lord has called us out and set us apart unto himself. Henceforth a door is shut behind us, and we cannot go back. We are like Bunyan's Pilgrim, we must go forward, for we have no armour for our backs. There is no inducement to go back if we fairly consider the matter. The City of Destruction which we have left is to be burnt with fire—shall we go back to that ? The enemies we have fought with and encountered are left behind ; shall we seek them to fight with them again, or to become their friends ? Sin is bitter to us, it hath already broken our teeth as with gravel stones,—shall we go back to it again ? What inducement have we to return to the house of bondage ? No ; by God's grace "Forward" is our motto till we come to "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Brethren, I am always glad when I can feel concerning any of you that you have finally done with the world, and may be numbered with the irreconcilables : for, alas, I fear there are too many who have so questionably come out of Sodom that their hearts are there still, and they are apt to cast lingering looks towards the accursed city. Ah me ! what if any of you should become pillars of salt ! "Remember Lot's wife !" But when, like Noah, you are divided from the world's pursuits by God's own act, then is it well with you. Noah was shut in, and could not follow after the festivities and worldlinesses of men. They were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, but to Noah the dance and the viol, the feast and the revel, called in vain. He could not now hoard up wealth, nor seek for fame among the sons of men. He was utterly exiled and excluded from all those things which charmed the minds of his cotemporaries ; he was out of the fashion, yea, out of the world. He was shut out, too, from all their

possessions ; even from his own farm he was now expatriated. Blessed is that man who, whatsoever he hath, hath it as though he had it not ; he sets no store by earthly things, and does not lock up his soul in his iron safe. He is shut out from the things which rust and corrupt, so that they are not his God, nor his treasure. Noah was divided from the evil generation among which he dwelt by the act of God : here was his safety. Adam was put in Paradise by God, but he was never shut in by God, and therefore very soon he left his first estate and wandered among thorns and thistles. But Noah was both put in the ark and shut in the ark, and therefore he never left his shelter until the Lord bade him come forth to possess the new world. Blessed are the men of whom the Lord Jesus can say, "They are not of the world." Such have passed by death into life, and are members of a new race, who shall go forth with joy, and be led forth with peace ; for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed is that man who has crossed the Rubicon, deciding to be on the Lord's side whatever others may do, Blessed is the man who has burnt his boats behind him, having landed in a country from which he will never retreat. I would fain be one who can cease to be, but cannot cease to be a Christian ; who can die, but cannot deny his Lord ; who will, if needful, go with him to prison and to death, and can do no otherwise, for the love of Christ constraineth him. Then is the will most truly free when it is under the sweet dominion of infinite love ; this is true liberty,—to be led about in triumph in every place, bound with the silken cords of gratitude, a captive to the power of grace. O happy man who can truly say that henceforth he is "shut in," because he is born again, and thus entirely changed. In the olden time a newly-converted man who became an eminent saint was met in the street by a woman who had at other times tempted him to sin. He took no notice of her, and at last she cried out, "Do you not know me ? It is I." "Ah," said the new man, "but it is not I." No, he was not the man who could take pleasure in uncleanness ; he could no longer sin, for he was born of God. Our inner life shuts us in to holiness, and the wounds of Jesus seal the door. The goodness of God interposes a barrier between us and evil ; for we say with Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ?" "How can we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ?" Hence our prayer is that of Toplady,—

"Oh nail me to the sacred wood,
There tie me with thy Spirit's chain ;
There seal me with thy fastening blood,
Nor ever let me loose again :
There let me bow my suppliant knee,
And own no other Lord but thee !"

We must now remark, secondly, that Noah was not only shut in, but he was *shut in by God*. There was the excellence of it,—*"The Lord shut him in."* No man can shut in as the Lord can. I cannot shut professors in to the ways of godliness as I could wish ; alas, with all my preaching, many wander, and try to be members of the church and citizens of the world too. We have among us avowed lovers of Christ, who act too much like "lovers of pleasure." I have preached no liberty to sin, as some do, but I have declared that "strait is the gate and narrow is

the way;" but yet these men make excursions into the broad road. I would still hammer at the door of the ark, in hope of shutting it close and keeping it so; but it is little that I can do. If Noah had shut himself in he might have come out again; and if any of the world outside had shut him in, he would, probably, have burst open the door; but "the Lord shut him in," and thus sure work was made of it. Oh to be enclosed by Almighty grace! The Lord has shut his people in unto himself by his choice of them in Christ Jesus, by his redemption of them from among men, and by his sanctifying them to be a peculiar people unto himself. Yes, the Lord has done it—"The Lord shut him in."

Take notice that this was very *close* shutting, so as to keep out the water. I fancy that if you saw a huge vessel lying upon the dry land where the floods would come to float it, you would be very anxious about that great opening in its side. It was evidently a huge doorway, for a pair of elephants had passed through it; so that it was a gaping leak which would take in enough water in an hour to sink the ark to the bottom. How could the great door be closed? All the timbers are stanch, and the ship is well calked, and pitched within and without with pitch; but all will go for nothing unless we can secure the big door. Merely to shut the door will be of no use. When the rain begins to fall in torrents from above, and the waters leap up from below, and the ship commences to rise, she will take in any quantity of water at the points where the door fits into the wood. Shipwrights will be wanted, and the calkers must come, and the men with the pitch. No shipwright could manage to shut so huge a door close enough for safety unless you give him time, and call in the help of other workers. Hence "the Lord shut him in" because nobody else could safely be trusted to shut such a door, against which a forty days' tempest was to beat most furiously. What a mercy it is that when we get into Christ by faith, and are shut in from the world with him, that we are perfectly safe, because the Lord himself has shut us in. We are not only brought to Christ Jesus by divine power, but we are preserved in Christ Jesus unto eternal life by the same divine might.

Beloved, there is no doubt about the salvation of those who are in Christ, for none can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Never has a soul perished trusting in Jesus, and never shall a soul so perish; for though salvation be so difficult that the righteous scarcely are saved, yet when the Lord Jehovah puts his hand to the work, it is well done, and done for ever. In Noah's case the huge chasm that would have let in the water-floods was perfectly closed up. Even so all the yawning leaks and openings of our fall and sin are closed by the grace of God, and in Christ Jesus we are secure: the Lord has shut us in.

That door was also shut *very fast*, to prevent the entrance of enemies from the outside. For who can tell? I should fancy that when the waters began to rise, when they were up to the ankles, or knee deep, those who had hitherto ridiculed the patriarch's barge would assemble around that door and clamorously demand to be admitted, resolved, if refused, to force their way. In vain. God had shut the door, and no violence could force it open, by push of crowd, or leverage of strength. Even so it is with us, we are protected against every onslaught of the

enemies of our soul. Come life, come death, things present or things to come, salvation hath God appointed for walls and bulwarks. Come temptations of every sort, come craft or assault of devils, none can force the doorway and come at us for our destruction. "At evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing."

This divine shutting in of Noah was *very necessary*: for I suppose that no one else could have moved the gigantic door upon its enormous hinges. It was probably too massive to have been stirred by Noah, or his united family. It must have been a moment of wonder and awe when that stupendous door began silently to move of its own accord, as though an invisible hand was carefully closing it, so that not a crevice should be made through which water could penetrate. The ark was soon as entire as if it had never exhibited an opening from stem to stern. You and I need shutting into Christ by a divine hand, or it never will be done securely. When a soul is brought to Christ it is by divine grace, but the whole is not done then; the grand difficulty is to keep us in Christ; for without continued grace we shall still perish despite all the arrangements of redeeming love. How many have ventured to sea in the galleys of their own resolve and have perished there! How many have hoped to shut themselves in with Christ by the mere force of personal determination, and the leakage of their own depraved heart has drowned them. But, oh, when God has brought us into union with Jesus he shuts us in, and we are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. The great door of covenant faithfulness is shut behind the believer, and he is surrounded by the power and grace of God, even as Noah was housed within the strong timbers of the ark. There is no crack nor cranny through which the floods of wrath can penetrate; omnipotent love hath shut us in.

And the Lord did this not only necessarily, but *graciously*. I call your attention to the change of the names in the text, a very significant change indeed:—"They that went in, went in male and female of all flesh: as God had commanded him: and the Lord"—that is, Jehovah—"shut him in." Elohim, as the Creator and Preserver, takes care of living things to preserve them; but the Lord, even Jehovah, the covenanting God, interposes in great mercy to protect his chosen servant. It was Jehovah who entered into solemn league and covenant with his servant Noah that he would preserve him in the ark, and float him into the new world in it; and as Jehovah the covenanting One he shut him in. There is no security like that which is given us by the covenant of grace. The hand which was lifted to swear our safety has also been outstretched to effect it. The everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure guarantees salvation to all who are represented by the great Head and Surety of that covenant, even our Lord Jesus. Love and power cooperate with faithfulness and truth to keep the chosen from all danger. Dwell much upon the covenant, and note the immutable pledges by which it is secured and the immortal principles upon which it is founded. Try to suck out the delicious sweetness which is to be found in the love of the covenant; for if you are an advanced child of God no form

of truth can be mere nourishing or refreshing to your mind. The doctrines which spring out of the covenant are peculiarly comforting to believing minds. The promises of God are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, and can never fail nor change, since the covenant standeth fast for ever and ever. Its tenure is free and sovereign grace, and it cannot be disannulled. Here is a line of it, "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." With such a promise doth Jehovah shut us in with Christ Jesus in matchless kindness and unspeakable love.

Notice, once again, that this deed was very *instructive* to Noah, it must have been so. Noah had ceased to live according to the mere senses of the body, and had come to perceive his absolute dependence upon God; but he was made by the opened door to see that dependence most clearly. By divine orders he had built an ark on dry land, and when it was builded Noah might have said "Now I feel safe": but he could not say so, for there was a gaping gash in the side of the ark, a vast aperture which he could not close up. It was an occasion of mercy to mankind, and Noah was probably glad to see it open that he might still preach righteousness and warn men to escape, saying "The door is open! Come, ye great sinners! Enter, ye sons of Anak. Come and be saved."

"Come to the ark, ere yet the flood
Your lingering steps oppose;
Come, for the door which open stood
Is now about to close."

Yet when he had done his sermon and went home perhaps he said to his wife "Beloved, how can this ark save us? That door, if ever the floods come, will be a dreadful danger to us. We cannot shut it, what is to be done? We must leave it with God. We are still dependent upon a divine interposition, and Jehovah will stretch out his hand and shut the door effectually so that we shall float above the deluge." In this condition of daily dependence the Lord would have his people abide, conscious to the very last that in him only do they live. "Without me ye can do nothing." We are entirely dependent upon our faithful, loving God for everything. If I were to get up to heaven's wall and gaze in through the pearly gateway, I know that if God did not give me grace to take the last step I should die upon the threshold of the celestial city. We rest upon God at the first for hope and pardon, and the like is the case to the last. "My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him." You will never be able to throw your cap up and say, "I have done with further prayer and watchfulness, for I need no longer depend on God." Never will you cease to look unto the Lord for your salvation till you shall be safely housed in heaven—

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Then joyfully will you confess that salvation is of the Lord, and glorify your great God and Saviour.

Thus, then, the text tells us that Noah was shut in, and that he was shut in by God; but now let us remember that *he was shut*

in with God; for in the first verse of the chapter we read "The Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark;" and this clearly shows that the Lord was in the ark already. O what a joy it is to know that when a soul is buried to the world it lives with Christ. "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." God is in Christ Jesus, and we are in Christ Jesus, and thus we have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus. The tabernacle of God among men is the person of Christ, and when we are joined unto the Lord and become members of his body, we are alive unto God and have fellowship with him. It is a blissful privilege to be hidden away in the person of Christ, for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him." You are in him, that is true, joined unto the Lord in one spirit. Oh the fellowship the saved have with God! How cheering! How near! How elevating! How strengthening! God has left all the world to its own destruction; but in the ark, Christ Jesus, there is joy, and peace, and fellowship; for God is there, and all his redeemed family are shut in with him. Happy man, to be enclosed in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Next, notice that Noah's happiness was all the greater because *he was shut in the ark with all his family*. This is a great joy, to have all your household brought unto the faith of Christ. Some among us have one or two of their family still without Christ, and strangers to his salvation. This is a great grief. I will not enlarge upon a subject so painful, but I know instances in which godly women have all their children with them in Christ, but the husband is still a stranger to the covenant of promise.

There is a brother among us who joys to dwell in Christ, but his father and mother are still without God and without Christ. How often have we heard that dear brother's prayer for his relatives. Perhaps his parents are here, and if so I would tell them how much their son's prayers affect me; he cries as for his very life that God would save his father. Some among us never pray in the prayer-meeting without strong crying and tears for their kinsmen according to the flesh; they cannot get through a prayer without mentioning their children, or their brothers, or others of their house; I hope they never will; I hope God will lay their kindred on their heart as a heavy burden till they are all saved in answer to prayer. Noah would have been an unhappy man that day if his wife had been outside the ark, or if Shem or Ham had been outside, or if Japhet's wife, or any other had been left to perish. How joyful are they who can say that all theirs are God's. You are very pleased, some of you, to see your sons and daughters respectably settled in life; thank God for his gracious providence; but, mark you, if they were all poor, and you saw them all saved, there would still be the highest cause for gratitude. Better to see them regenerate than rich, better married to Christ than to a fortune. Give your God no rest till it is so; and if there is one who seems quite outside of spiritual things, pray for him as Abraham prayed for Ishmael, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" It is better you should pray hard for them while they live, than that you should mourn bitterly over them when dead, as David did when he lamented aloud, "O Absalom, my son; would God

I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" May the Lord, when he blesses us as he did Jacob, extend that blessing to all our tribes, and cause all that are born unto us to be born again unto himself.

Noah and his household were *shut in*, dear friends, *to be perfectly preserved, and then to come forth into a new world.* The rains descended, the water-springs poured forth their fountains, the waters rose, and the huge vessel began to quit the ground, and to walk the waters like a thing of life. Methinks the little company might well have sung a hymn; but if they did, it is probable that the hymn was brought to a pause as they heard the cries of drowning men and women outside. I cannot attempt to picture the scene: they must have come clustering in great multitudes round the ark when they saw that in very deed the flood was descending and uprising. As the fast-closed ark began to move the inmates must have heard a chorus of cries, and groans, and shrieks of men and women as they perished in the insatiable waters. Down poured the incessant showers, beating on the roof with perpetual thunder. The hidden eight were in solitude, shut in from the all-enveloping sheet of rain. The waters continued to gather, and still up rose the ark; though they could scarce tell where they were amid the watery solitude, they knew that they were safe. When they looked out and saw no living thing, not even the top of a mountain, and they were floating on a sea that knew no shore, how strange must have been their sensations! But the Lord had shut Noah in, so he was perfectly safe. He knew that the Lord High Admiral of the seas was at the helm to steer the lonely barque aright. Then came a strong wind to assuage the waters; and how the ark must have sped before the gale, none knew whither: it was tossed about, doubtless, for it is the nature of winds to raise waves, and where there was no shore to give the slightest shelter the vessel must have felt all their force. Yet the favoured family was safe.

"Without deep calleth unto deep,
But all is peace within."

The waters were assuaged, and by-and-by the ark owned to a strange sensation, for its keel was touching the earth, the ark was coming to its rest. God remembered Noah, and brought the ark to rest on the mountains of Ararat. But will the ark ground safely? Perhaps she will break her back on a rock, or slide down the side of a hill, or over the brink of a precipice. No, no. He who was her Architect will be her Preserver. God has found an anchorage for the stars, and he can surely berth a ship. He found the ark a safe resting place, and brought out all her passengers safe and sound. He is berthing many a vessel now in the everlasting harbours, and he hath such skill in navigation that no vessel which belongs to him shall ever come to an ill end. So far Noah fared well and felt solid ground beneath him once again. Now the waters quickly assuage; but what a mass of mud—shall the rescued family run the risk of fever and miasma? they shall not be let out till the land is dry, and then when the earth has been fertilised by its own destruction and is ready to receive the seed from the sower's hand, and the grass has begun to grow for the cattle, then shall they come out into a new world. How fair the face of nature so newly washed! How like a bride decked for her marriage day! God sets

open wide the door, and out they come, camels, elephants, sheep, lions, Noah and all his family, rejoicing to range at liberty. A sacrifice is offered and God smells a savour of rest. So shall it be with us: shut in with Christ away from this world, to which we are not conformed, we shall ride in safety as exiled beings out of this old world into another. A day cometh when the new heaven and the new earth shall be seen, and then the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace; then shall our sacrifice of praise be accepted of the Lord. Blessed are they who enter into the ark of Jesus Christ, and so die to the old life that they may live in newness of life, rejoicing in him who sitteth upon the throne and saith, "Behold, I make all things new!" This be your lot and mine for ever and ever.

II. I have purposely reserved a very few minutes only for the second and much more painful point of my discourse, which comes out of the words, SHUT OUT.

To have the door shut is well enough for Noah and those who are with him, but as for all the rest, that big door when it closed on its hinges shut them all out! Shut them all out to perish with a swift and sure destruction. *Who were they?* I wonder if any of the sort are here!

Well, they were a people that had been preached to. Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," and fulfilled his office perseveringly. The men of his generation were not left to perish without light; they had been warned, they had been instructed, they had been entreated. They were such as you are who have been habitual hearers of the word, but hearers only. Of course, you have none of you heard the gospel for one hundred and twenty years from one man; but many of you have heard it quite long enough to have incurred great guilt in having rejected it so often.

They were a people who had been prayed for. You will ask me how I come to know that. I answer that Ezekiel speaks of three men notable as intercessors, Noah, Daniel, and Job; and I feel sure he would not have mentioned Noah in that company if he had not been a man of great prayer. I believe that he prayed much for his generation, and yet they were not saved. Sure I am, dear hearers, that some of you are daily the objects of earnest supplication. On Monday nights I have had notes about some of you, and hundreds, and even thousands of us have joined together in praying for you. Beside that, you know the dear ones at home are earnestly interceding for you, and some who are now in heaven pleaded hard for you ere they departed: yet you will be shut out as sure as you are alive unless you fly to Christ, and enter into his salvation very soon.

They were a people who had many of them been associated with Noah in his work. It is hardly likely that Noah built the ark with his own hands all alone; he must have hired fellers of trees, and carpenters, and calkers, and shipwrights of various kinds. None of these were saved. It is a sad thing that those who helped to build the ark were shut out of it! Remember, however, that they shut themselves out! They chose their own destruction. Do I speak to any who have submitted to build the house in which they worship? who contribute their money to the expenses of the church and to the help of the poor, and

to the education of the young ; and yet to have no part in Christ ? I do not understand those of you who are zealous in promoting religion, and yet have no share in the great salvation ? Why will you resolve to be shut out ? As sure as ever you sit on that seat, you will be shut out of heaven, and shut out of Christ for ever, unless you arise and go unto your Father confessing your sins and seeking his mercy. May God arouse you to flee from the wrath to come !

These people had seen great wonders. Half the world must have gathered to see the camels and elephants, eagles and peacocks, snails and worms, all come running, or flying, or creeping to the ark. Such a sight never could have been seen before. There they come in pairs : four wild beasts, two and two ; and clean beasts by sevens ! Voluntarily entering the ark ! What a sight it must have been ! Many saw it and confessed that God's hand was in it, and yet they did not enter the ark themselves. Oh, my hearers, some of you have been here in times of revival ; you have seen drunkards saved, you have seen the most unlikely ones converted, and yet you have not turned unto the Lord. Be ye sure of this—you will be shut out of hope for ever ! May God grant it may never be so ; but except you repent it must be the case. Let me read you a passage from the gospel of Luke, and as I read it, think of it and tremble : " When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are : then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are ; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Thrust out—pushed out, not permitted to enter—the great door interposing between you and all hope of mercy.

Next, notice *what they did*. What they did was this : they were a people who took all their delight in worldly things. We are told in the New Testament that they " ate and they drank, they married and were given in marriage, till the day that Noah entered into the ark." They were altogether taken up with this world—like some of you, who have no regard for the world to come, but live as if this life would be everything. Prayer and praise, and looking into eternal things are all a weariness to you ; you look after the shop and the farm and the house, and forget God. I do not blame you for diligence in business any more than I blame these people for eating and drinking and marrying ; but to make this the main thing in life is to despise God and heaven and eternity. O my hearer, remember your God ! your Saviour ! your soul ! death ! heaven ! hell ! How little do you think of these things ! Be not like these ungodly ones who gave their hearts to worldly things.

And then they did not believe, there was the point. Whatever Noah might say they replied, " Poor old man, you have entered on a second childhood. Perhaps when we are five hundred years old we shall talk nonsense too." When the patriarch came to be six hundred years old they said, " That greybeard is always telling us these stories," and they jested at the old man's fable. Alas, some of you do not believe the

gospel, and therefore do not seek its salvation; but it is true, and you will own it to be so when you get breast deep in the fire-flood, as you will be ere long. Oh that you would believe, and escape from the wrath to come! They despised the long-suffering of God. They said, "Here has Noah been telling us these one hundred and twenty years that a flood is coming, and where is it?" Among ourselves it is a common proverb, "Christmas is coming," but in Noah's days there must have been more sting in the proverb, "The deluge is coming." They would not believe that such a thing could ever be. Some say, "I have gone on very well, I have had no religion and yet I have always prospered. I have seen godly people getting poor, but I have always added field to field and house to house. I do not want religion. I am comfortable enough without it." If we say we pity them, they reply, "We do not want your pity." Just so! but the tables will be turned ere long, and then you will demand our pity, though it will avail you nothing, for the door will be shut. Once let God shut the door, and there will be an eternal separation between the ungodly and all hope and happiness.

What came of it then? The door of hope was shut, and the multitude perished without hope.

When I was thinking this over I fancied that I could preach about it; but I cannot. When I realize the fact that any one of my dear hearers should be shut out of heaven I cannot bear myself. I want to find a secret place wherein to weep. If an angel should say to me this morning, "All your hearers shall be saved but one, and you must pick out the one who shall be shut out of heaven," I should run my eye anxiously up and down these lines of pews, and I should take up many an hour, and at last cry, "No, I cannot take the responsibility of marking out the doomed man." I should keep you here, I think, till I expired before I could make the horrible death-choice. I would say, "Lord, save every one." And as for the marked man, I would cry, "Spare him! Do spare him!" Oh, my hearers, will you do for yourselves what I could not dare to do for you? Will any man choose for himself to be lost? Will he count himself unworthy of eternal life, and put it from him? Then I must shake off the dust of my feet against him. I will have none of the responsibility. If you will be damned you must do it yourselves. I will not be a partaker in the crime. Your blood be on your own heads. Go down to the pit if you will deliberately choose to do so; but this know, that Christ was preached to you, and you would not have him; you were invited to come to him, but turned your backs upon him; you chose for yourselves your own eternal destruction! God grant you may repent of such a choice, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis vii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 501, 525.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

DRESSING IN THE MORNING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21ST, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”—Romans xiii. 11—14.

THIS passage is a piece of holy teaching set forth under the parable of rising in the morning and preparing for the work of the day. May the Holy Spirit help me to place it before you in a clear light.

It is a great mistake in a man's life when he does not know the times in which he lives, and how to act in them; and when he does not know the time as to the day of his own life, so as to apply his heart unto wisdom. The apostle speaks of his Roman brethren as “*knowing the time.*” What, then, is the time of day with the Christian? It is no longer the dead of the night with us; but “the night is far spent, the day is at hand.” A little while ago the dense darkness of ignorance was about us; but the gospel has made us light in the Lord. We lay asleep in the gloom of sin; like a thick cloud it enveloped all our powers; but God hath brought us out of darkness into his marvellous light. Some of us were plunged in despair, a night without a moon, without a star; we were without hope, and feared that our future would be the “blackness of darkness for ever.” That hopeless gloom is over, and we have light and joy in Christ Jesus.

The day-star is shining upon us, the light that lighteneth the Gentiles cheers our path, and we look for a perfect day. It is not as yet full day with us. Cloudless brightness is still a thing of desire and expectation. The sun has risen, but it is not noon as yet. For that we look when we shall see the Well-beloved in his kingdom, and wake up in his likeness. “The day is at hand,” says the apostle, and that is a word of good cheer.

What, then, is “the time” which Paul would have us know? It is the early morning, it is the dawning of the eternal day. The sun has scattered the thick darkness of nature's night; we are enjoying his first golden beams: the time of the singing of birds has come, the time of the dew of grace, and of the fresh breath of the Spirit. It is not full

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day yet ; but, still, the night has gone, and the perfect day of our salvation, when body and soul too shall be delivered from every taint and trace of the work of Satan, is "nearer than when we believed." The light and heat of day are strengthening ; the darkness and chill of night are vanishing ; we are getting further off from the power of ignorance, sin, and despair ; we are getting more and more under the influence of knowledge, holiness, and hope. The apostle would have us know of a surety that the true light now shineth, even that which will grow brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Joy be to our souls, the Sun of righteousness hath risen upon us with healing beneath his wings.

Of what value is the knowledge of the time of day? It lies here. Certain duties arise out of the hour. "Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." From morning to evening, and from evening to morning again, there is a round of duty to be fulfilled, and each work is comeliest if attended to in its own season. When the shadows of evening fall the time has come for going home, where domestic joys await us at the hearth. It would not be right for the labouring man to go home in the morning, nor seemly for him to be going out at night. Each duty has its own time of day, and therefore the apostle would have us know the hour and be assured that it is high time to awake out of sleep. He urges us to the duties which attend the hour of rising, the hour to which we have now come.

As my Master helps me I shall endeavour, first of all, to give *the morning call* ; and then, secondly, to preach *the morning gospel*.

I. First, LISTEN TO THE MORNING CALL.

I have shown you that the hour of the day is that in which men should rise and begin their daily service ; and its first reasonable duty is to *awake*—"It is high time to awake out of sleep." When day begins sleep should end. The bugle sounds in the camp, "Awake! Awake!" But are not all Christians awake? Yes, from the sleep of death, but not from other kinds of sleep. Many need rough shaking and loud calling before they will be thoroughly awakened. Beloved brethren, I speak to you upon whom the light has arisen, and who are now delivered from the power of darkness, for you will not deny that it is high time for you to shake off the bands of slumber. You should rise from the sleep of inaction. Do not let your religion consist in receiving all and doing nothing. Work while it is called to-day, and as you wish to be faithful servants of your gracious Lord be up at once. It is time for you to stir yourselves, and see what can be done with the golden hours for the glory of your Redeemer's name. Go forth and see what herbs are to be planted, what weeds are to be rooted up, what part of the garden needs watering, and which of the vines need pruning. Your Master's vineyard needs constant labour, for he himself keeps it with unceasing care. Up, then, gird up your loins and yield your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

Leave also all lethargy behind you. At night a man may yawn and stretch himself as he likes ; but when the morning comes, good sir, be done with yawning, and display energy. Look about you and think, for the day will be none too long. Does not the song of the lark and the glitter of the dew bid you shake off your slumber and rise with listlessness? Oh, I hate to see some professing Christian

people go about the Lord's work in such a languid way, as if it did not matter how their Lord was served. Ah me! If God was obeyed with half the activity with which the devil is served we should soon see a change in church life. Men are wide awake enough when they are serving themselves. Jingle a guinea seven miles off and they will hear it; but if service is to be done for Christ you must put the clarion to your mouth and blow a blast as loud as the judgment summons before you can wake men up to hearty enthusiasm. It is high time that we woke out of half-heartedness.

Moreover, it is time to have done with dreaming. That is proper for the night, but not for the morning. An ungodly man's pursuits are mere dreams; he hunteth after shadows, he feedeth upon ashes; his weightiest business is a mere vision, a thing of nought. You who are not of the night, must not dote on the world's shadows, but look for heavenly substance. Live for eternal realities. Set about business that is real in God's sight, such business as you will think worthy of your heart when you come to die and when you stand before the judgment seat of God. Have done with day dreams as well as night dreams and come to stern matters of eternal fact. Trifle no longer; the time past may suffice you for that. Be earnest! Be all awake, put forth all your powers, arouse all your faculties. It is high time to awake out of sleep.

When awake, what is the next duty? Is it not to *cast off your night clothes*? Our text saith, "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness." The man who is just awakened, and finds that it is morning light, must first of all put off the garments which covered him during the night. He quits his bed, and in so doing shakes off his bed clothes and leaves them. Your friends do not come down stairs wrapped in the sheets which wrapped them at night; we should suppose they were seeking their graves if they did so. The coverlet of night is not our covering by day. There must be a putting off in the morning before there can be a putting on; there is a measure of undressing before we commence to dress. Simple and homely as the figure is, it conveys a lesson which I pray you to remember. Sins and follies are to be cast off when we put on the garments of light. I have known a man profess to be converted, but he has merely put religion over his old character. He has been a passionate man with bad companions, and all he has done is to carry his bad temper into a church-meeting. He has been accustomed to drink more wine than is good for him, and all the change is that he drinks it in respectable company or in secret. He has taken up the saint without casting off the sinner. The rags of his lust are rotting under the raiment of his profession. This will never do; Christ has not come to save you *in* your sins but *from* your sins. Anger and drunkenness, and such like, must be got rid of; Christ never came that you might christen your anger by the name of warmth, and your drunkenness with the name of liberty. I have heard of persons living unclean lives who have heard that faith in Jesus Christ would save them, who have misunderstood this doctrine so grievously that they have thought of believing in Christ, and continuing in their evil ways. That attempt will be their ruin. Rahab the harlot was saved by faith; but she was saved from being a harlot any longer. The rags of sin must come off if we put on the robe of Christ. There

must be a taking away of the love of sin, there must be a renouncing of the practices and habits of sin, or else a man cannot be a Christian. It will be an idle attempt to try and wear religion as a sort of celestial overall over the top of old sins. The King's daughter is all glorious *within*, or she would never have received her clothing of wrought gold. The vision of Zechariah teaches us the way of the Lord: when he saw Joshua clothed with filthy garments, the Lord did not put upon him a goodly vesture over these; but he first said, "Take away the filthy garments from him," and then he added, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." You must be cleansed in the blood of Jesus before you can be clothed in the white linen which is the righteousness of the saints. See to it that, being awakened out of your sleep, ye put off all the garments of the night.

What were they? We find a list of them in the third chapter of the epistle to the Colossians: "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Were we fond of the joys of the ungodly? put them off. Did we speak things which are untrue? Put them off. Could we sing a loose, lascivious song? Put it off. Were we angry, morose, malicious? Put it off. Were we greedy, grasping, covetous? Put it off. Alas, many professors are as greedy of gain as ever they were; but they wear religion over the top of their miserly rags, and want you to call the churl generous, though he is as stingy as he can be. Whatever it is that is unworthy of the light of day, let us put it off. The apostle says, "*cast off.*" Let the habits of your sinful nature be henceforth regarded as cast offs: put them right away and say, "I have done with them! There will not be another night for me, and therefore I shall not want them. Bury them, burn them; they are my cast-offs." Let us only remember our evil habits to weep over them; let us only speak of them to warn others, and to glorify the grace of God. As to ever bringing out our ill habits, and trying to put them on occasionally, God forbid it should be so!

So far we have described our getting up: first, we awake, and then we cast off the garments of darkness. Now *we must put on our morning dress.* The believer should at once look to his toilet and array himself for the day: "Let us put on the armour of light." "What," says one, "armour? Why, I thought my danger was over. The darkness has departed, and I am no longer afraid of thieves and robbers, for the daylight has come? Why, then, should I put on armour?" Is it not instructive that no sooner do we awake than we have to put on "the whole armour of God"? Does it not warn us that a day of battle is coming? Brethren, you may as well expect a conflict, for it is sure to come, and it will be wise to put on your harness for the fight. Dress according to what you will meet with during the day. You are not at home yet; the land of peace is yet beyond you. Young converts think that they have got to heaven, or very near it; but it is not so: you *will* get there one day; but the time is not yet. You are in an enemy's country: put on the armour of light. Perhaps before you get down to breakfast an arrow will be shot at you by the great enemy; or you may come down after your morning prayer feeling as safe as if you were among

the angels, and yet you will not get through the first meal in the day without an assault from the arch-enemy, or an outburst of your own corruptions, or an attack from the world. Your foes may be found in your own household, and they may wound you at your own table. Before you leave your bed-chamber you had better put on girdle, helmet, breastplate, shield—you had better take the complete panoply. A Christian is never safe unless he is protected from head to foot by grace, for in such a world as this you know not behind what bush the assassin may be lurking, or from what corner the fatal bolt may fly. Go forth as a mailed knight to the war, for the battle rages on all sides, and you need the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. The saint must be a man of war from his youth, he must pray that his hands may be taught to war and his fingers to fight.

The Greek word, however, may be understood to signify not only armour, but such garments as are fitted and suitable for the day's work. These should be put on at once, and our soul should be dressed for service. Pray God to clothe you in such style that you may be ready for whatever comes. You are not a gentleman on the parade, but a workman in his workday clothes. Some people are too fine to do real service for the Lord. When the Duke of Wellington asked one of our soldiers how he would like to be dressed if he had to fight the battle of Waterloo again, he answered that he should like to be in his shirt sleeves. How I wish that Christians would get into their shirt sleeves, as if they meant work for Jesus. I like to see the carpenter with his apron on bending down to his work, and not sitting on the bench swinging his legs all day. Alas, that some Christians should be usually seen in this latter posture! O brethren, it is morning with you, and I beseech you, by the mercies of God, array yourselves to do your Lord's bidding. What said God to Jeremiah? "Gird up thy loins and arise." Brace your soul to action: there is work for you to do to-day which angels might well envy you. Go forth like a man ready for work. The Lord would have us live with our loins girt about, our lamps trimmed and our lights burning, because we have come to an hour when idleness and inaction are out of place, and earnest, watchful diligence is required of us. Let us put on the habiliments of light, and let us work while it is day; for our Father worketh hitherto, and Jesus works.

Now you are dressed, what next? *It remains that we walk forth and behave as in the light.* The directions are explicit—"Let us walk honestly, as in the day," which means, let our demeanour be such as becomes daylight. How should a child of light conduct himself?

The word translated "honestly," may mean decently,—with decorum and dignity. In the middle of the night, if you have to go about the house, you are not particular as to how you are dressed; there is no person to see you, and so you will slip from one room to another in dishabille; but when you rise in the morning, and come down to your day's work, you choose to be somewhat neat. You do not go out to your business slip-shod and half-dressed, but you array yourself according to your station in an appropriate manner. Let it be so with you spiritually: holiness is the highest decency, the most becoming apparel. You live in the daylight, brother; therefore walk as one who is "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." Yet more, walk as one who has the

eye of God upon him, which is infinitely more. "Thou God seest me." King of kings, should I rush into thy court in dishabille? Should I ask thee to walk with me while I am all undressed, or wearing filthy rags, which I ought long ago to have cast away? The soul's toilet should be a matter of great care. "Be ye clean," saith God. He will not walk with us unless we keep our garments unspotted from the world: he would have us observe that dignity of spirit and conduct which are becoming in the temple of God. Sleep in what garments ye may; but when ye walk abroad in the day, take heed, O princes of the blood royal of heaven, that your raiment is according to your rank.

"Walk honestly," says our translation, because that is the right thing for daylight. The thief breaks through and steals beneath the cover of the darkness; but a child of light must be upright and just. I earnestly beg all professing Christians to be honest in heart, and then they will be honest in word and deed. You ask me, "Do you mean that we should pay our debts?" Of course, I mean all that, but I mean far more: be honest when you speak to others and of others. Do not say of any man behind his back that which you would not utter to his face. Do not carry a mask about with you, it is a horrible instrument of torture to an honest man. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. Many act upon quite another principle, practising reserve and policy, if not duplicity. They bring themselves into a great deal of trouble by being cunning, and "playing their cards well," as they say. What has a Christian to do with such a deceitful piece of gaming? Walk honestly; let all your actions be such as will bear the light. A man that stands under a powerful electric light bearing right down on him, would feel uncomfortable with everybody looking at him; at any rate, he would be careful what he did. Behold, the light of eternity is shining full upon your soul, God himself sees you, you stand in the blaze of the eternal day. O Christian man, act with transparent honesty; have nothing to conceal: come to the light, that your deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. Be clothed with light, and walk in the light as God is in the light.

Our position in the light of the morning demands of us one more point of behaviour: *we must renounce the deeds of darkness.* If we have been truly awakened, and have put on the garments of light, it behoves us to have done with the things that belong to the night. I will not dwell upon them at any great length; but I may not pass them over, since the apostle thought it necessary to mention three pairs of evils with which we must have done. He mentions them because even in Christian assemblies it is necessary to denounce these things. People exclaim against the preacher if he speak plainly home about the vices of the times. "Really, it is shocking," says one, "I do not like to hear such indelicate things referred to." No, no, ladies and gentlemen who do such things cannot bear to hear of them by way of rebuke. I have noticed that none are more fantastically nice than the morally nasty; none are so ready to find fault when a spade is called a spade as those whose morals most want digging. They will commit the vice themselves, but they cannot bear to hear it mentioned—it shocks their awfully delicate minds. The apostle Paul felt none of the noxious subtleties which touches sin with a delicate hand; he speaks out plainly,

and he says that all Christian people, first, must have done with *sensuality*, which he describes as "rioting and drunkenness." If a drinking bout is held it is usually at night. Banquets generally begin in the evening; if they become scenes of gluttony and drunkenness they advance far into the night; but the sun rebukes such orgies, and men usually give heed to the warning: "they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Christian men have done with night, and ought to have done with all excess in meat and drink. Alas, there are some who spend more over a single dinner for a few than would keep families of poor people a month. Gluttony is seldom mentioned as a possible fault, and yet I fear it is far from being an obsolete vice among professed followers of Jesus. "Drunkenness," well I need not say how shameful it is in any man; but he that professes to be a Christian man, how temperate, how abstinent should he be; for intoxication is a soul-destroying sin, and no drunkard can enter the kingdom of God. These are night vices; let the children of night have them if they will: as for us, we desire to be filled with the Spirit, and fed upon the bread of heaven, for we are the children of the day. We have nobler feasts than the banquets of revellers, and choicer wines than the vintage of Sodom can yield. Take heed, brethren, of these works of darkness.

Then Paul denounces *impurity* by saying, "not in chambering and wantonness." It is an awful thing when a man calls himself by the name of Christian, and yet can be foul in language, unchaste in conversation, lascivious in spirit, wicked in life. If any man indulges in fornication and adultery, and yet calls himself a Christian, he will surely come under the curse of God. We speak of such persons weeping, for they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Oh that you who are young might be kept from anything like looseness or effeminacy. Avoid glances, words, and thoughts which tend that way. Do not go near the borders of that sin; for men and women sin not grossly all at once, they slide by degrees, as the vessel slides from the stocks into the sea at the time of its launching. It moves very little at the first; but by-and-by it gathers impetus, and glides rapidly into the deep. God keep you from sins of the flesh, for they are a deep ditch, and the abhorred of the Lord do fall into them. They are base deeds of the night: does not nature itself teach us so? Vice walks abroad beneath the moon: it is by night that our streets are defiled. O you who have reached the morning light, abhor these things, and hate even the garment spotted by the flesh.

The next night deed is *passion*; passion taking the two shapes of "strife and envying." Brawls are for the night. Fierce assaults disturb us in our sleep, but they are not usual in the day. So Christian men, being of the day, are not to strive. It is a great pity when strife comes into a family, when brother is divided from brother and father from son, and when relatives cannot speak well of one another. These bitter things are for the night: you have reached the daylight, and must have done with them! Envy is a thing of darkness and shame: that "green-eyed monster" comes out in the dark and finds fault with those who are better than itself. Sinners do not like good men because their excellence rebukes them, and hence they endeavour to mar their reputation. This evil is not of the day: leave it, scorn it, dread it, abhor it. God deliver

you from it! Away, then, from all deeds of darkness, and seek only that which may be set in the face of the sun and cause no man to blush.

II. Now, I have preached so long upon things required of you that you are beginning to say, "Ah me, how much there is for us to do! How shall we ever accomplish it? We have to wake, to put off our night garments, to dress in suitable attire, to behave ourselves as children of light, and to avoid the deeds of darkness. Alas, what shall we do?" Now listen, ye anxious ones; here is something sweet and blessed for you: you shall be inclined and helped to obey in all things; therefore hearken diligently and hear, that your souls may live. I preach to you THE MORNING GOSPEL. Here it is—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

This verse has been rendered very famous in church history, since that chief among the fathers, the mighty teacher Augustine, found the light through reading this verse. He had been leading an ungodly and more or less dissipated life when he began in a measure to think upon his condition, and he thought he heard a voice saying to him, "Tolle, lege. Tolle, lege!" "Take up and read." So, taking up the New Testament which lay near, he began to read it, and, as God would have it, he opened upon this very place, and he read: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Here are his words, which I will read to you:—"I would read no further, for I needed not; for when I had read to the end of this sentence all the darkness of doubtfulness vanished away, as if some clear light of security were poured into my heart. It was as if it had been said, 'O man, acknowledge thy misery, thou art naked; cover thy filthiness: *put upon thee Jesus Christ!*' And forthwith I felt a fire within me. My heart was lightened, the scales fell from mine eyes—I was able to see!" How earnestly do I desire that these words may strike some of you in the same powerful manner. Does anyone here desire to put off his old garments of sin and to dress in robes of holiness? And does he mourn over an empty wardrobe? See, here is a robe for him—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Did I hear one cry, "You told us to put on armour, but we have neither shield nor breastplate; how can we put on the armour of light?" Here is the panoply—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Does the man cry, "I am afraid to go into the world undressed, and I dare not put on the old garments of darkness; but what can I do?" Here it is; here is the death of sin and the life of holiness—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, blessed, charming word, I wish I had the power fully to set forth its meaning before you.

For, first, in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is *covering for your nakedness*. The garment covers the man; he is hidden, and his garments are seen. Come, then, poor sinner, and take by faith the Lord Jesus Christ to be a covering for your soul. You are naked, but he will be your robe of righteousness. There is in the Lord Jesus a complete and suitable apparel for thy soul, by which every blemish and defilement shall be put out of sight, according to the word, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." In Christ Jesus

there is merit to cover our demerit, purity to cover our impurity, obedience to cover our disobedience, beauty to cover our deformity, perfection to cover our imperfection, acceptance to cover our provocation. We are comely with the comeliness which the Lord Jesus puts upon us. He is seen, and we are hidden, or only seen in him so as to be accepted in the Beloved. We have nothing to do but to enter into Christ by faith; for, virtually, that is what a man has to do with his garments: he gets into them, and so he who puts on Christ is in Christ, Christ is over him and round about him. Did a poor naked, shivering soul ever hear pleasanter words than these—"Put on Christ"? You may do so, for the Lord now commands it. Was there ever a sweeter message? You, poor soul, just awakened out of sleep, and startled into saying, "What must I do to be saved?" Here is Jesus set before you; he is perfect in righteousness, matchless in holiness, unrivalled in beauty, and you may put him on and stand clothed in that righteousness and beauty. I hear you say, "I see him, but how is he to be mine?" He is yours by God's free gift: put him on! You have not to improve upon him, or add to him, or embellish him, but to take him as you take your coat, and put him on. There he is, he is a robe that delights to be worn. Myriads of souls have tried this garment, and it has been exactly suitable to every one out of all who have put it on. This is all you have to do, to put it on, and that the Holy Spirit will help you to do. You have not to make the garment, to decorate the garment, or in any way to add to it or to alter it, but only to put it on. Nakedness, poverty, or guilt need not prevent a man's putting on a robe which is provided for him. Put it on! Put it on! This is a most vivid picture of what faith does. She puts Christ about her, and he covers all. Faith does not say, "I must clothe myself and then put on Christ." No, no! its cry is, "Because I am naked I cover myself with Christ." The soul saith, "I have nothing of my own that God can look upon with complacency, but I will put on Christ, for I know in him God is well pleased." The sufferings of Jesus will be set to my account, his merits shall avail for me, and his righteousness shall be my righteousness. Oh it is a blessed, blessed word. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and sing, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

"Ay," saith one, "I need more than just to be covered, I must have a garment provided for my necessity; suitable for my everyday work." My text points you to a full supply: "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" as the most suitable dress for a saint at work, as well as for a sinner desiring justification before God.

As we have already said, a first necessity is to awake, and truly none can lie and dream after they have once beheld his glorious robe; they are eager to obtain it. Our next necessity is to cast off the old garments of the night, and nothing helps us more than to put on Christ. Only look at this robe of righteousness as yours, and you will loathe the filthy rags of sin at once. When a man perceives the perfection of the righteousness of Christ, which is freely given to him of God, he abhors his sin, he loves his God, and pines to be like him in holiness. There is no breeder of repentance like simple faith in Jesus Christ. Unbelieving philosophers tell us that if we preach salvation by faith in

Christ alone people will take licence to sin; but in this they err from want of observation. Now speak your own experience, Christian man: did you ever feel yourself moved to sin by the assurance of being justified by Christ's righteousness? Never was there such a case in this world. A man may hear about it and turn it into an excuse for sin, but he cannot in his heart believe it and do so. I know that when I most clearly see that I am saved by Christ alone it is then that I most of all pine to be holy. I never follow after personal righteousness so eagerly as when I know that my righteousness comes wholly from the Lord. The grandest motive power for the death of sin is the death of Christ; and nothing makes us so eager to die *unto* sin as Christ's death *for* sin. Off goes the filthy raiment at the sight of the glorious, spotless righteousness which is freely presented to every needy sinner in Christ Jesus.

Ay, and it is not only repentance that is thus wrought by Christ, but all the power to be holy, to be gracious, to be forgiving, to be heroic, to be enthusiastic in the service of God, all comes through Christ when we are in him. If you desire to be holy in life the short path to it is to have done with your own righteousness and put on Christ. If the man who has been a drunkard resolves to be sober let him put on Christ, and in Jesus he will deny himself. If the man who has been unchaste would fain be pure in life and heart, let him put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. There is such a matchless power about a simple faith in Christ, when it puts on Christ to be our righteousness, that it leads the believer to such a walk as is decorous, dignified, honourable, holy. The man is moved to walk worthy of the noble garment in which he is arrayed, and his whole life rises out of the common level into the excellence of grace.

I would call attention to this garment very specially in a few words. The text says, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." What made him use the three names there? Because he meant to point out the three senses in which we clothe ourselves from head to foot with Christ. "Put ye on the Lord," become his servant, wear his livery, let him be your Rabbi, your Master, your King, your Lord. Put ye on "Jesus" the Saviour, acknowledge yourself as a saved one, saved by him whose name is called Jesus "for he shall save his people from their sins." Put ye on "Christ,"—that is the Anointed: take an anointing from God the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ to whom he is given without measure. As Christ is anointed to be prophet, priest, and king, put him on in all these three offices and rejoice to do so. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Do not put on Jesus only as your Saviour, put him on as your Commander. Do not only put him on as your Master and Saviour, but as your Christ, anointed for you. Take a whole Christ to yourself that you may be wholly in him, and so may be spiritual, gracious, holy. Henceforth may those around you see nothing of you, but much of your Lord. May your outward character be so Christlike that men may see Christ displayed upon you, as a new garment is displayed by the act of wearing it. May the spirit of glory and of Christ rest upon you. May you be clothed with power. Our Lord said to his disciples "Tarry at Jerusalem until ye are endued with power from on high,"—the word signifies "clothed." If we are clothed

with Christ we shall be clothed with power from on high ; even as he has said "the works that I do shall ye do also." Therefore put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Yes," but I hear another say, "I want not only raiment to cover my nakedness and supply my necessity, but I want *apparel for my dignity*. You told us that we were to walk abroad in a worthy and honourable manner." Ah, and so you will if you put on Christ. Oh what a bright creature in the sight of God is the man who has put on Christ. God himself asks no purer or more acceptable array. You never saw a seraph : bright like a flame of fire is each holy messenger of God, but if you could see a soul that is arrayed in Christ's righteousness you would think a seraph a dull, dim thing, compared with it ; for a seraph wears nothing but created brightness, but a child of God clothed in Christ wears uncreated splendour. The perfection of God is upon the soul that has put on Christ. Ay, and while God thus sees us in Christ, and is well pleased with us, our fellows are obliged to admire us too. If you put on Christ, so that you become like to Christ, your walk and conversation will be bright and lustrous before the eyes of those about you. They, perhaps, will not like it, they may even hate you for it, but they will not be able to do otherwise than own your excellence. He who lives in Christ lives a charming life, which, by its loveliness, commands the homage of onlookers. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, you that trick yourselves out with jewellery and ornaments, how much more lovely and dignified you would become if in all your carriage and conversation, by sacred gentleness and love, by holy zeal and unswerving decision for truth, ye put on Christ.

"Ay," says another, "but you have forgotten part of your sermon. You said that now we were awake we were to put on armour." I have not forgotten, for Christ is *armour for our defence*, therefore put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a coat of mail for you. The man that does as Christ would do, and thinks as Christ would think, and lives as Christ would live, and makes Christ to be all in all to him, and thus armours himself with Christ, is thereby made impervious to the shafts of the enemy, and amid the darts of temptation or the arrows of slander he may abide unharmed. The Lord is our defence, and the Holy One of Israel is our King.

"Ay," saith one, "but you told us that the day when it was once up would never again darken into night, but brighten into a perfect day." It is even so, and here is *raiment provided for our expectancy*. We may expect to meet with years of mingled conflict, service, and suffering. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" and you will be prepared for all weathers, fair or foul, and for all conditions and requirements. This garment will never wax old : it will last you all the desert through, and, what is more, it is suitable for Canaan, and you shall keep it on for ever and ever. We need a dress that we can wear in all the events which will happen in the awful future, the endless future. It is on this account that I press home the words of my text—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Our Lord is a fit robe for life and death, for time and for eternity. I expect to battle till I die ; here is my armour, the integrity and uprightness which I learn of Christ will preserve me. I expect in death to rise out of this lower life into a higher one ; and

when I reach that higher life, that glory life, I shall require a dress, and I shall find it in my Lord. I cannot have a better garment than the Lord himself, and there is a wedding coming on! Every believer expects to be married to his Lord. Then, dear friend, you must certainly have a wedding dress. How can you go in unto the marriage feast, not having on a wedding garment? but here you have it:—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." When the King comes in to see his guests, and he sees Jesus Christ covering them all, he will be well pleased. He will see his dear Son reflected in them all, and from them all, and his delight shall be in them, even as it is in his Son. If you put on the Lord Jesus Christ you will be fit for the inspection of the King, fit for all the royalties and pomps of the eternal marriage, fit to stand in the coronation of Christ himself as one of the many brethren of the crowned Firstborn.

Now I have done; but how I wish that some souls would be moved as Augustine was, and at once put on Christ before they leave the place. I wish that some of you that came in here this morning with nothing on but your old ragged righteousness would at once pull it off and throw it under your feet. Here is Jesus Christ himself waiting to become your righteousness. Will you not have him? His is a perfect righteousness, for he magnified the law, and made it honourable. He made a perfect robe, and then he dyed it in his blood, that you might wear it as the imperial purple of the kingdom which he gives you. "What is to be done with it?" Put it on! Did I hear you say, "I would like to take it home to think about it"? What, and do nothing? I pray you put it on at once. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. "But I do not know that it will fit me." Put it on and try. "Oh, but I am not fit to wear anything so good." I know you are not. Put it on, and you will see how wonderful you will look when Jesus covers you. The fitness lies in the dress, not in you. Do you cry, "I am anything but what I ought to be"? Put it on, and let Christ be seen. "Ah, but still, am I to be saved in a minute?" Put on Christ at once, and see; for it is written, "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." Put it on, poor soul; that is all. "But I have nothing that I could bring." Do not bring anything, but put on Christ. There he is! Do not refuse him! I beseech you, do not refuse him; for he who will not put on Christ when Christ is freely set before him must not wonder if at the last he stands shivering amidst the glare of the last lightnings, in front of the awful judgment-seat, with the eyes of men and angels, and the eyes of the great Judge, fixed upon him. Ah, then he tries to hide himself and cannot, and he shrieks to rocks and mountains, "Hide me, hide me from the face of him that sitteth on the throne." He will have no one but himself to blame when it comes to that, if he will not put on Christ. May the Lord Jesus now be made unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans xii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—913, 435.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SINGING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.”
—Psalm cxxxviii. 5.

ACCORDING to the connection this is spoken of kings. “All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” It will be a novel spectacle to see kings singing in the ways of the Lord. As a rule they have not much troubled themselves therewith, but they have often troubled those who love the ways of God, and opposed them, both by their laws and by their example. There will be another order of things in the earth yet. These days will be shortened for the elect’s sake, and the time shall come when kings shall fall down before the King of kings, and all people shall call Jesus blessed. Oh that the time may speedily arrive when a choir of kings shall with loud voice magnify the name of the Lord.

Well, dear brethren, that time has not come yet, and therefore let us sing all the more. If the kings have not begun to sing, let *us* sing. And well we may. We have full permission to do it, for the next verse encourages us—“Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.” He will be just as pleased with the song of the peasant as with that of the prince, with the psalm of the workman as with that of the monarch. We, too, may come, though obscure and unknown, and we may bring our two mites which make a farthing; and if they are all the praise our soul can give, the Lord will count that we have not given less than kings themselves. Let us make up for royal silence. If others cannot praise God, and speak well of his name, yet let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed out of the hand of the enemy. If *we* do not speak, surely the stones of the street will cry out against us. Therefore I shall take the text and use it in reference to ourselves, believing that for us this promise stands fast, “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.”

I. We shall discuss the text under four observations, the first of which is the text itself,—“THEY SHALL SING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.”

That is to say, first, *gracious persons take pleasure in the things of religion.* A man's religion is worth nothing if it is not his chief delight. That which we do before God as task work is ill done, and is not acceptable. God will not have slaves to grace his throne; nor would he be served by us in the spirit of bondage. It is his delight to be served by sons, and to be waited upon by those who do his commandments with delight. If your pleasure is not in the ways of the Lord, then, surely, you cannot know much about those ways. You must be a stranger to them, and you must be walking in paths which look like the ways of God, but are not really so. I do not say that those who know the Lord are always happy, but I say that they are always "the seed that the Lord God has blest." I may not say that we are always pleasurable in heart in the ways of wisdom, but I will say of the ways of wisdom themselves that they are pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. Yes, brethren, we do not groan out our religion. We do not go to our places of worship as negro slaves went to the calaboose to be flogged. I do see some on a Sunday who look dreadfully solemn, and they walk to their places of worship as if they were going to the gallows and never expected to come back alive; but that is not the spirit in which I would have you go up to the house of God. Go with lightly tripping feet, saying—

"I have been there and still will go :
 'Tis like a little heaven below."

I would not be kept away, or bought out of the house of God by all that could be offered me. I believe that Sunday should be spent in recreation. You are dreadfully shocked, and well you may be; but what do I mean by "recreation"? It means creating us over anew. Oh, that everybody who talks about spending the Sunday in recreation would know the meaning of the word "recreation," and would come to be recreated, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, invigorated, strengthened, revived, and made to rejoice in God. The Lord's-day is the highest hill of the week. On that day we stand a tiptoe on Pisgah, and look to "the rest which remaineth for the people of God." It is the type and the antepast of that everlasting Sabbath which remaineth for the people of God.

Now, as it is with Sabbath keeping and going up to the house of God—that there we sing in God's ways,—so it is with all God's ways: they are all full of delight to his people. Those who heartily enter into them are happy people. "Blessed are the people in whose heart are thy ways." Their heart shall be full of joy, and overflowing with delight.

Hence it follows, next, that *they do not go out of God's ways to get their songs.* They shall sing in the ways. Alas! I have heard of some who go here and there, as they say, "to get a little pleasure." What? What? Do I understand you? You find no pleasure in the ways of God? Then, friend, you are a hypocrite. That is plain English; for he that is really in God's ways finds his pleasure there. That is his chief delight, and he can sing, as our hymn puts it—

"I need not go abroad for joys,
 I have a feast at home;
 My sighs are turned into songs,
 My heart has ceased to roam."

Do you call that man a loving husband who says, "Well, you know,

you must go away from home sometimes just to have a little pleasure. You cannot always be in the company of your wife and children. You must go from home to get a little pleasure." That is a bad fellow! I am very sorry for his wife and children. A bad lot: I am sure he is. And he who talks about being married to Christ and joined to his church, and then says that he goes elsewhere to find his pleasure, is a traitor. I shake my head about him; I am afraid that I may have to break my heart over him one of these days. When you see professors seeking pleasure in sin and worldliness there is something rotten at the core. True men of God shall sing in the ways of the Lord, and find something to sing of while they are in those ways.

It means, too, that *they sing as they are actively engaged in the ways of the Lord*. That is to say, while they are engaged in the service of God their hearts are joyous and glad. They do not stop the work to go and sing, but they sing as they work. Sailors when they pull a rope make a cheery sound; as they heave the anchor they sing after their fashion. Soldiers march to battle with sound of trumpet and beat of drum, listening to music while they march; so Christian men go on their pilgrimage, and keep step to the sound of joyous psalms and hymns. They sing in the ways of the Lord.

But sometimes the ways of the Lord call for difficult service. Gracious men may have to visit sick and desponding persons. Surely, if they are of any use as sick visitors their hearts will sing even while they are sympathizing with the sick. They have to talk with those who are anxious, and to lead them to the Saviour, and I believe there is no way of doing it so well as by showing them the peace which Jesus gives. Perhaps believers are called to plough fields that seem barren. Yes, but they must still do it; singing as they break the clods, singing as they plough, and singing as they sow the seed. That is the best way to do it. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord when those ways call for prayer. Song and prayer are like butter and honey, a royal mixture. I have heard that of old in America the principal day of the year was a day of fasting until some good divine said that, since God had brought the Puritans from England and landed them in a wilderness and yet fed them till the wilderness became a garden, and since he had multiplied their numbers till they had become a great nation, he thought it was time that they kept a day of thanksgiving; and so they have done ever since. A day of prayer should be a day of thanksgiving too. Saints sing in the ways of earnest prayer. It never damps the ardour of intercession to give thanks unto the Most High. Whatever you are doing for the Lord, whether it is distributing tracts or teaching the young, mix holy joy with it. I may say of thanksgiving to God what was said of salt in the Bible,—“salt, without prescribing how much.” Set no limit to it. Nobody ever does sing the high praises of God too often or too heartily.

“They shall sing in the ways.” And when the ways get very rough, and become the paths of sufferings, and the pains are frequent and incessant, then sing still. No music that goes up to the throne of God is sweeter in Jehovah’s ear than the song of suffering saints. They shall praise him upon their beds and sing his high praises in the fire. To go right through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and sing all the way:

to climb the hill Difficulty, and to sing up its crags; to pass by Giant Grim, and even by the castle of Giant Despair, and through the enchanted ground, and still keep singing; and to come to the river's brink and descend into it still singing—this is lovely in a Christian. May the statutes of the Lord be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage till we mount to sing above.

Once more, under this first head, I think, dear brethren, that the children of God sing in the ways of God because *they are in a case for singing*: in a right state of mind for singing. When we are in the ways of the Lord, dear friends, we are strong; "they go from strength to strength." When we walk as God would have us walk we are made strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Limping pilgrims cannot sing, but those whose weakness casts itself upon the strength of God can sing. Do you know how strong you are? I will be bound to say you are better acquainted with the other question—how weak you are? But do you know how strong you are when God is with you? Why, you are irresistible. The belt of faith girds a man with strength that is only equalled by Omnipotence. If the Lord be with thee, what can stand against thee? If God strengthen thee thou shalt run without weariness; thou shalt walk without fainting; sometimes thou shalt even mount as upon the wings of eagles. Well may that pilgrim sing who is made strong by the mighty God of Jacob.

You have safety also; for in the ways of the Lord all his servants are protected from danger. In the king's highway "no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon." You shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," in the ways of the Lord. Well may that traveller sing who is perfectly safe! He holds his tongue if there are footpads about, and robbers likely to pounce upon him, but when he feels that he is under the guardian care of the Lord of the way, who has given his angels charge over him to keep him—yea, when he feels that the Lord himself is round about him like a wall of fire, he must sing in the ways. Strength and safety are ours, and therefore let us sing.

Saints sing in the ways of God also because they have guidance. He that does not know whether he is in the right way or not may well be silent; but he that is sure about his road—ay, sure about it even to his journey's end—may well sing in the ways. We have one with us who will lead us into all truth: we have the Comforter with us, who will direct our way even to the end; how can we help singing? Pilgrims to Zion's city bound who have such a conductor as the infallible Spirit of God ought to sing. It would be treason on their part if they did not. Strength, safety, guidance—surely these should make us glad.

And then, besides that, we have provision all along the road. The pilgrim who does not know where he will lodge at night, feels a little anxious; but if he knows where there is an inn, or where he has a friend, he goes along right cheerily. I know nothing about my way to heaven from this spot to heaven's gate; but this I know, there are places of refreshment provided for God's weary pilgrims every day and every night until we enter into the great mansion-house of God above. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." Perhaps we shall halt at Elim, where there are wells

and palm trees, but if we do not come to Elim, we shall rest somewhere else. There is sure to be a place of shelter for the saints in every night of their travel. Therefore do we sing in the ways of the Lord, for our pasture is on all high places. It is a way of abundant provision, and we may well sing, for the Lord continually fills our hearts with gratitude. As we journey on in the ways of the Lord, fresh streams of comfort come to us from one earthly source and another, but chiefly from the great source of everlasting consolation, even from Christ Jesus himself.

I can speak well of the ways of the Lord and earnestly stir up all my fellow-pilgrims to sing in them, for they have been good ways to me. Let us march on, and sing on; let us proceed with a step and a song, a step and a song. Let our halting places be charmed with sacred psalmody, and may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, abide with us and keep us singing the praises of God.

That is the first observation: "they shall sing in the ways."

II. But I find that Dr. Gill gives another reading of the text, "THEY SHALL SING OF THE WAYS OF THE LORD." That is true doctrine, and an admissible translation, and so we will dwell upon it. "They shall sing of the ways of the Lord." Not only are God's ways the place of their song, but the subject of their song.

How shall we sing of the ways of the Lord? We will arrange them under two heads. We will sing of God's ways to us, and we will sing of our ways which lead us to God.

We will sing of *God's ways to us*; but where shall we begin? Shall we begin where God began with us? With that eternal council-chamber—with that divine predestination—with that secret decree of salvation by which he separated his people from the mass of the world, and made them to be his or ever the earth was? Here is a grand beginning. We will sing of the eternal ways of God in his purpose and decree before time began. But then we shall have to sing of God's actual ways when the time for the fulfilment of the purpose came,—of the covenant and all its provisions,—of the incarnate God descending to the manger,—of that same incarnate God opening his heart to pour out the purchase price of our redemption. Oh, the ways of the Lord with us through Christ Jesus and through the Spirit who was given because Jesus ascended to his Father and to your Father! What a subject! Then we will sing of the ways of God in the application of redemption to us his people—how he convinced us of sin and led us to the Saviour, and how since then he has led us by a right way, helped us, comforted us, chastened us, directed us, opened all his rich treasure to us, communed with us, told us the very secret of his soul, wiped our tears away, removed our fears, charmed our hearts! This is a long, long story, and each believer sees a new phase of it in his own experience. Surely, the mere hints I have given are enough to show that we may well sing of the ways of the Lord.

And you never need be ashamed to sing of those ways. David says, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways." God's ways are such gracious ways, such wise ways, such holy ways, such ways of wisdom and of lovingkindness, that in any company we may talk about them, and in every place we may sing of them. We will sing of the ways of the Lord with us.

But then the next thing, and the main thing in this particular passage, is to sing of *our ways to God*. What is there to sing of with respect to those ways of God by which we come to him? I think that there is everything in them to sing about. For one, I am so glad that I am in the ways of the Lord when I recollect *where I once was*. As a dear brother said in prayer before this service began, what a merry to be plucked like a brand from the burning! The saddest saint is, after all, happier than the gladdest sinner. The best house in the City of Destruction, where everything is to be burnt with fire, is not equal to the poorest shanty on the road to heaven, where, if the pilgrim fares hard, he is on the way to glory. When we think of where we used to be—of the city whence we came out; when we think of Egypt and the iron furnace, and the bondage, and the slavery from which God has brought us out with a high hand and an outstretched arm,—why, we ought to sing in the ways of the Lord.

But, then, it is not only where we came from, but it is *where we are going to*, that should make us sing in the ways of the Lord. When Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, was a preacher of the gospel, and a young man, he set his affection upon a young lady who was an heiress. Her father said, "Mr. Henry is, no doubt, a good man, and a scholar and a gentleman, but he is a poor man; and I would have you recollect that we hardly know where he came from." "Oh, father," said the young lady, "but I know where he is going to; and he is going where I should like to go with him. Do not let that stand in the way." And it did not. That is the point about all God's people. We know where we are going to, and we can sing in the ways of God because we know where the road ends. Unconverted men and women, every step you take you are a step nearer hell. It is a very solemn thought, but I want you to recollect it. Every hour that you unconverted people live you are an hour nearer to the pit that burns with the wrath of God. Oh, I pray you, think of that. But the man who is a believer is on a road which brings him, every step, nearer heaven. I do not know a sweeter hymn than that which we sometimes sing,—

"And nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

And what a home it is! Oh, if our way home lay through seven thousand hells, yet the end would recompense it. If we had to pass through deaths as many as the hairs of our head, yet five minutes with Christ would recompense us for all our pain. I am sure that it is so. Let us, therefore, press forward singing, because we are getting nearer to the place where song shall be our element for ever. They shall sing of the ways of the Lord because they know where they come from and where they are going to.

But about the ways themselves. Well, we sing of them, because *it is a good road*. The road to heaven is a splendid road, and it has had some fine travellers on it.

"The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment,
The King's highway of holiness,
I'll go, for all his paths are peace."

The glory of that way is that the Prince Immanuel trod it. With sorrowful steps he traversed that way, and he has left the prints of his pierced feet all along it; it is for us to feel that it must be a good way, since holy men and their glorious leader have trodden it. It is a way in which many who are very dear to us have gone, some of whom have reached the end of it now. Some of us, can track the footprints of a grandfather, a grandmother, and uncles, and aunts. We rejoice to be going to heaven with father, and mother, and friends, and relatives, and dear ones whom we cherish. The way is good enough for them; I am sure it is good enough for us. Lately our modern divines have pretended to improve the road; they have taken up the stones and laid down a rotten wood pavement, which is very slippery for pilgrims; but we will have none of their nonsense. The road that was good enough for Whitefield and Wesley is quite good enough for me; and the road that suited John Bunyan and the Puritans is quite to my mind. These modern ways are a modern nuisance, and I would like to see them deserted for ever. We can do better with the good old way than with any of these refinements.

“ We are going forth with our staff in hand,
Thro' a desert wild in a stranger land;
But our faith is bright and our hope is strong,
And the Good Old Way is our pilgrim song,
'Tis the Good Old Way, by our fathers trod,
'Tis the way of Life, and it leadeth unto God.
'Tis the only path to the realms of day,
We are going home in the Good Old Way.”

We love to sing of the way because there is *good company in it*. No company in the world is equal to that of those who are going on pilgrimage to heaven. If I meet with any who are not going there, I can enjoy their talent, and their interesting conversation, but their talk is poor after all. We say when the conversation is over “That was a fine gentleman, and he made merry company, but it did us no good. Better far to get with half a dozen godly old women at a cottage meeting than waste time with him.” Let us meet with those who talk about Jesus Christ and experimental godliness, however ungrammatical their language may be, sooner than sit with the greatest of worldlings whose conversation lacks a savour of Christ. Go you in the ways with a song, because there is such good company to sing with.

And there is such *good accommodation on the road*. I have told you of that before. “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” God in providence makes all things work together for good. Our heavenly Father bids the angels keep watch and ward about his children. God gives us the provender of his promise, and supplies our souls so that no good thing is kept from us. Well may we sing, then, in the ways of the Lord.

We sing because we have such *fine prospects on the road*. Down in the Valley of Humiliation—why, no scenery is lovelier! Upon the hill tops of Amana, and Tabor and Pisgah, when the Beloved is with us, what views of himself and of his coming and of his kingdom and of the glory to be revealed open up before us! The way seems short with all

these pleasant views before our mind's eye, and we burst forth into singing in the ways of the Lord.

And the best of it is that *we have daylight to travel by*, for we are not the children of darkness. We walk in the light to the kingdom of light. Even when we say that it is dark with us, we do not mean that it is so dark as it is with the sinner when it is bright with him, for our darkest darkness is brighter than the sinner's brightest brightness. As I have often said, I would sooner be God's dog than the devil's darling. Better to lie like God's Lazarus, full of sores, with no surgeons but the dogs, than go and sit up there clothed in scarlet, with pampered Dives. Oh, yes, we are a joyful people, and we travel by daylight to heaven: the light we have from Christ, and the light we have within will melt into the eternal light. Come, brothers and sisters, let us sing of the ways of the Lord. When we have a mind for a tune let us sing about God's goodness to us in his ways.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground
From faith and hope may grow.

Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We're marching through Immanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high."

III. The third observation is, that **THOSE WHO SING IN THE WAYS OF GOD ALSO SING OF THE LORD OF THE WAY.** "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord," and then some read it, "That great is the glory of the Lord." That is the subject of their song.

When they sing about the Lord of the way this psalm supplies us with the points of their song. Kindly open it and keep your eyes upon it. "I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee." What for? "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name." What for, David? "*For thy loving-kindness.*" God is kind, but he is more than that. It is *loving-kindness.* A man breaks a leg, and the surgeon sets the bone. That is kindness. But suppose the man's mother could set the bone? Oh, how she would do it with loving-kindness! When the surgeon's own son is under his hand, and the surgeon is dealing with a broken bone, it is not only kindness, but loving-kindness—the sweetest of the sweet—the kindest of the kind. Now, that is how God has dealt with us. Oh, how tenderly! "Thy gentleness hath made me great." He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Was there ever a God so good to anybody, as God has been to us? I reckon myself to be the darling child of his providence; and I think I hear many of you say, "And so are we." Some of you, perhaps, have had more whipping than others, not so much because you deserved it, but because, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Often the master is hardest with that boy in the school who is getting on best, because he will pay for chiding. He will find no fault with a dull, stupid boy; he never can make much of him; but the very one who does the best is he whom he drives on the most vigorously, for he means to make a senior wrangler of him. So,

perhaps, you, dear friends, are having more pruning than anybody else, because you are a branch that will pay for pruning, and will bring forth better grapes. There is more love in the chastening that you get than in the gentler way in which God deals with others. Come, let us bless his name. He is a loving God. Let us sing in his ways and chant the lay of his lovingkindness.

And what next? "For thy lovingkindness and for thy truth." Ah, that is a blessed thing: a faithful God, a true God, a God that cannot lie, a God that cannot fail his people, a God that never breaks his promise or forgets it. Oh, come, let us sing unto his name while we are in his ways. Tell the world that men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie, but our God is true. Tell the world that riches make to themselves wings and fly away, that honour and fame are but so much wasted breath and empty air; but tell them that God is, and that in him there is substantial good, and faithfulness that never fails. Here is a sweet song for you to sing concerning the Lord of the way while you are in the way.

David goes on to say, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." *Answered prayers* make a fine set of hymns. Old prayers make new songs. When God hears prayers we should let him hear them again. When he has heard them as prayers then let him hear them as praises. We are often faulty here. I am afraid that we go to God with our errands when we are in want, for we have a cupboard love for him. We are like many a dog to his master: he loves his master for the bones he gives him. I do not say that we ever rise above that,—we love the Lord because he hath heard our prayers and our supplication; but still let us sometimes go to the Lord wholly to praise him. Say, "Lord, this time I will not ask anything of thee except a grateful heart; and if thou givest me that, then I will praise thee, and praise thee, and praise thee, because my soul is wholly taken up with adoring gratitude for what I have received." Oh, dear friends, file your prayers when God does *not* hear them, and when he does hear them, put them on another file. Keep a silver file for prayers that are unanswered, but a golden file for prayers that are answered, that you may render unto him according to the benefit you have received. Psalms penned at the mercy-seat when petitions are granted are sweet sonnets for the children of God.

The next subject for song is *God's condescension*. Read the sixth verse, and let your heart sing it,—“Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.” Oh, do sing this. I remember when I was but a youth and began to preach the gospel, and won souls to Christ, and they called me “the boy preacher,” oh how I used to bless the Lord that he would save souls by a boy. Obscure and unknown, but yet the Lord thought of me and used me. I cannot help praising him on my own account because of that. Very likely some of you are in the same condition. You may be poor; you may have little talent; you may be quite unknown; but though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. He hears the praises of the unknown. Wonderful is the power of “the great unknown.” I am persuaded that the strength of the church lies in its unknown members, and possibly the soul of the music that goes up from earth to heaven lies in the unknown singers—

unnamed among men, who, nevertheless, praise God day and night. Oh, do bless him that he thinks of you. O ye maidens, whom he looks upon as he did on her of old who said, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, for he hath remembered the low estate of his handmaiden," praise ye his name. And O, ye matrons, remember Hannah, whose sweet song in the Old Testament was to the same effect as Mary's in the New Testament. She, too, praised him who looked upon the weak and the feeble, but caused the bows of the mighty ones to be broken. Condescending love is a charming theme. Have you got through that list of songs, dear friends?

Then I have another budget for you. Just read on, and begin to sing of *God's delivering mercy*. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me." Someone says, "Why, that is a song about something that is to be done." That is so. We ought to have quite a collection of songs of the future.

"And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-loved music set;
Glory to thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

Did you ever bless God for to-morrow's dinner? "We have not had it yet." No; but you will have it. Thank God for it to-night. Martin Tupper recommends young men long before they are married to pray for the wives that they will have, and there is good sense in his advice. Do not you think that it is right for us to pray ahead a bit. Yes. Well, if it is right to pray ahead, let us praise God ahead for the mercies that we are to have. When I lay very sick, I used to praise God at the thought of getting better. I could not help it. I was so glad when I thought of standing in the pulpit again. I am sure I praised God for this night's sermon six months ago. Come, brethren, let us bless the Lord for the favours which the Lord has laid up for them that fear him. When you do not seem to have anything to sing about to-day, sing about what is going to be to-morrow; and if there seems to be nothing on earth to sing about, sing about the everlasting future. Soon you shall never be tempted to say, "What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and wherewithal shall I be clothed?" You shall have no cares to fret you, nor sins to repent of, for you shall be perfect before the throne of God, clean escaped from all the dangers and the trials of the way. Come, let us sing for what will be. "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me."

In the last verse there is something to sing about which certain of our friends are afraid of,—"The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me." Sing of *final preservation*. Some good people are not sure of that; they say, "Saints fall from grace; God begins a good work in them, but he leaves them, and they do not get to heaven." Brother, if you cannot reach that note, put your fingers as high on the harp strings as they will go; but I am happy to say that mine can touch this lofty note, for if there is a doctrine that I am certain of, it is the doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints. I will undertake to say, that if the Bible does not teach that it does not teach anything. Words have ceased to have a meaning if the Bible does not teach the eternal

life of true believers : at least, to my soul it is so. Hear these words : " I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." " He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Why, there are fifty reasons why he that has the grace of God truly in him, and is really born unto God shall not fall away. But one said to me some time ago, " Yonder man has fallen from grace, and has been regenerated three times." " Oh," I said to him, " You need a new word then,—re-re-regenerated." I have heard of the new birth, but I never heard of a newer birth. I have heard of being born again, but I never heard of being born again and again and again. I discover no trace of it in the word of God ; but I see distinct tokens that it is impossible. It is written—" If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they have crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." There is a life which God puts into the soul, and that life is eternal ; but if it could die—if that were possible—the man would be dead hopelessly. " If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted ? It is henceforth good for nothing, but to be trodden under foot of men." " We believe better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." " Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it." " He will perfect that which concerneth me ;" and therefore I will sing this song to my stringed instruments as long as I live.

" My soul from the palms of his hands
Eternity cannot erase.
Impressed on his heart it remains
In marks of indelible grace.

Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given ;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

There is something to sing about.

IV. And now I close with the fourth observation, which is this : THEY SHALL SING TO THE LORD OF THE WAY, AS WELL AS OF THE LORD OF THE WAY. " They shall sing in the ways, for great is the glory of the Lord." Oh, brethren, let us *take care that all our songs are to the honour and praise of God*, for if we ever sing to our own praise it will be idolatry. I fear much public worship is thus marred. We heard of a man in Boston, in America, praying such a grand prayer that the newspapers said on the next day that it was " the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience." I am afraid that a good deal of praying is of that sort, and I am sure much singing is no better. Why, we hear of churches where four people are hired to do the praise of God, and all the people sit still and listen to them. And that is according to the New Testament, is it ? It must be a very " revised version," surely. I find nothing of that sort in the book I have been accustomed to use. Let all the people of God praise him. Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation. " Such very remarkable singing ! The place is quite renowned for its musical performances." This is a poor

achievement. Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure—singing in which there is not so much art as heart—not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion. They shall sing to the glory of God.

And mark this, dear brethren, if you and I sing with the Spirit and the understanding, we shall *increase the manifested glory of God by bringing others to sing in his ways*. Sinners pass by God's ways sometimes, and as they go by, though they cannot see, for they are blind, they can hear something, and they say one to another, "Who are those people that tramp along the road?" They are pilgrims to heaven. And the sinners say, "Let us stop and listen a bit." They listen; and they hear the pilgrims groaning along, and moaning along, and one says to another, "Let us go the other way. Let us escape from such miserable company." But another time a number stand listening by the side of the hedge, and they ask, "Are these pilgrims going along? Why, they are singing! Are they Methodists? Are they Presbyterians? Are they that strait-laced kind of people?" "Yes." "Well, but they are singing, and they sing very heartily, too. They seem to be uncommonly merry. Is that their general way?" "Oh, yes," says one, "and they have good reason to be happy. I was with one of them, and he was telling me what the Lord had done for him, and I thought that if the Lord had done as much for me I should be happy, too." "And do you know any of these people? Are they troubled as we are?" "Oh, yes, they have their troubles, but they take their cares to their heavenly Father, and find rest." "Then," says one, "I would like to go to their meetings, and learn their secret," and so they come and find the Saviour. Legions of flies are caught by this honey. Many are brought to God by the sweet lives of his people. If we can rejoice in the Lord always, we shall bring many to God who otherwise would have turned on their heel and said "We will have nothing to do with these dull dreamers; we are too young to lose all our joy in life." Tell the young people that the most joyous life is the life that is nearest to God—that the most merry life is the life of the man who has found all for this world, and all for the world to come, in God and in his Christ. God help you, dear brothers and sisters, to sing all the day long, and may you even have "songs in the night," to the glory of him whose name is—"the happy God." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalms cxxxvii., cxxxviii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23, 138, 713.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAVED IN HOPE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”—Romans viii. 24, 25.

ACCORDING to our version “we are saved by hope,” but that is scarcely in accordance with other parts of Holy Scripture. Everywhere in the word of God we are told that we are saved by faith. See the first verse of the fifth chapter: “Therefore being justified *by faith*.” Faith is the saving grace, and not hope—save only as hope is under some aspects tantamount to faith. Faith is the saving grace, and the original should be rendered—and one wonders that it is not so in the Revised Version—“We were saved in hope.” It would prevent misapprehension if the passage were so rendered; for as that eminent critic, Bengel, well says, “the words do not describe the means, but the manner of salvation: we are so saved that there may even yet remain something for which we may hope, both of salvation and glory.” Believers receive the salvation of their souls as the end of their faith, and it is of faith that it might be of grace. They are saved by faith and *in* hope.

At this present moment believers are saved, and in a certain sense completely saved. They are entirely saved from the guilt of sin. The Lord Jesus took their sin and bore it in his own body on the tree, and offered an acceptable atonement, by which the iniquity of all his people is once and for ever put away. By faith we are at once saved from the defilement of evil, and have free access to God our Father. By faith we are saved from the reigning power of sin in our members. As saith the Scripture, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” The crown is removed from the head of sin, and the arm of its strength is broken in the heart of every Christian by the power of faith. Sin strives to get the mastery, but it cannot win the day, for he that is born of God doth not commit sin with delight, or as his daily habit, but he keepeth himself so that that evil one toucheth him not. As to the penalty of sin, that has been borne by our great Substitute, and by faith we have accepted his sacrifice, and “he that believeth in him is not condemned.” We rejoice, therefore, at this
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moment in salvation already obtained and enjoyed by faith which is in Christ Jesus. Yet we are conscious that there is something more than this to be had. There is salvation in a larger sense, which as yet we see not; for at the present moment we find ourselves in this tabernacle, groaning because we are burdened. All around us the creation is evidently in travail; there are signs of birth-pangs in a certain unrest, upheaval, and anguish of the creation. Things are not as God originally made them. Thorns are in earth's furrows, a blight has fallen on her flowers, a mildew on her grain. The heavens weep and saturate our harvests, earth's bowels move and shake our cities. Frequent calamities and disasters are portents of a great future which shall be born of this travailing present. Nowhere on earth can a perfect paradise be found. Our best things are expectant of something better. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain with us. Even we that have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, and so are blessed and saved, nevertheless groan within ourselves, waiting for a further something, a glory not seen as yet. We have not yet attained, but are pressing on. Our first soul-thirst as sinners has been quenched; but there are within us still greater desires, by which we hunger and thirst after righteousness with longings insatiable. Before we ate of the bread of heaven we hungered for mere husks; but now our newborn nature has brought us a new appetite, which the whole world could not satisfy.

What is the cause of this hungering? We are under no difficulty whatever in answering the question. Our griefs and longings, and unsatisfied desires are principally gathered up in two things. First, we long to be totally free from sin in every form. The evil which is in the world is our burden; we are vexed with the evil conversation of the ungodly, and are grieved by their temptations and persecutions. The fact that the world lieth in the wicked one, and that men reject Christ and perish in unbelief is a source of much affliction to our hearts. We have said with David, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" We could wish for a lodge in a wilderness, far off from the haunts of men, that we might in peace commune with God, and hear no more of blasphemy, murmuring, wantonness, and crime. This is not our rest, for it is polluted, and so far we look for a great deliverance when we shall be taken out of this world to dwell in perfect company. Yet even the presence of the ungodly were a small matter if we could be completely delivered from sin within ourselves. That is among the things not seen at yet. If a man were free from all tendency to sin he would no longer be liable to temptation, or under necessity to watch against it. That which cannot possibly be burned or blackened has no need to dread the fire. We feel that we must shun temptation, because we are conscious that there is material within us which may soon take fire. "The Prince of this world cometh," said our Lord, "and hath nothing in me"; but when he comes to us he finds not only something, but much congenial to his purpose. Our heart all too readily echoes to the voice of Satan. When he sows the tares the furrows of the old nature soon produce a harvest. Evil doth remain even in the regenerate, and it infects all the powers of the mind. Oh that we could get rid of the memory of sin! What a torment it is to us to remember snatches

of loose songs, and words of ill savour. Oh, that we were rid of the imagination of sin ! Do we mourn enough over sins of thought and fancy ? A man may sin, and sin horribly, in thought, and yet may not have sinned in act. Many a man hath committed fornication, adultery, theft, and even murder in his imagination, by finding pleasure in the thought thereof, and yet he may never have fallen into any one of the overt acts. Oh that our imagination, and all our inward parts, were purged of the corrupt matter which is in them, and which fermenteth towards foulness. There is in us that which makes us cry out from day to day, "O wretched man that I am ; who shall deliver me ?" If any man here says, "I feel no such emotions," I pray God that he may soon do so. Those know very little of true spiritual perfection who are content with themselves. A perfect child grows, and so does a perfect child of God. The nearer we come to perfect cleanness of heart the more shall we mourn over the tiniest spot of sin, and the more shall we see that to be sin which once we excused. He who is most like Christ is most conscious of imperfection, and most weary that the least iniquity should hang about him. When a man saith, "I have reached the goal," I fear he has not begun to run. As for me, I endure many growing pains, and feel far less pleased with myself than I used to be. I have a firm hope of something better, but were it not for hope I should account myself truly unhappy to be so conscious of need and so racked with desires. This is one great source of our groaning. We are saved, but we are not completely delivered from tendencies to sin, neither have we reached the fulness of holiness. "There is yet very much land to be possessed."

Another cause of this winter of our discontent is our body. Paul calls it a "vile body," and so indeed it is when compared with what it shall be when fashioned in the image of Christ Jesus. It is not vile in itself viewed as the creature of God, for it is fearfully and wonderfully made ; and there is something very noble about the body of a man, made to walk erect, and to look upward and gaze toward heaven. A body so marvellously prepared to be the tenement of the mind, and to obey the soul's behests, is not to be despised. A body which can be the temple of the Holy Ghost is no mean structure, therefore let us not despise it. It is a thing for which to be eternally grateful, that we have been made men if we have been also made new men in Christ Jesus. The body came under the power of death through the Fall, and it remains so ; and, remaining so, its lot is to die sooner or later, unless the Lord should suddenly appear, and even then it must be changed ; for flesh and blood, as they are, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And so, poor body, thou art not well matched with the new-born soul, since thou hast not been born again. Thou art a somewhat dull and dreary dwelling for a heaven-born spirit ! What with aches and pains, weariness and infirmity, thy need of sleep, and food and clothing, thy liability to cold, heat, accident, decay, as well as to excessive labour and exhausting toil, thou art a sorry servant of the sanctified soul. Thou dost drag down and hamper a spirit which else might soar aloft. How often doth a penury of health repress the noble flame of high resolve and holy aspiration ! How often do pain and weakness freeze the genial current of the soul ! When shall we be emancipated from the shackles of this natural body and put on the wedding dress of the

spiritual body? What with the sin dwelling in our breast, and this vesture of mortal clay, we are glad that now is our salvation nearer than when we believed, and we long to enter into the full enjoyment of it.

Here my text gives us good cheer. From the sources of our present groaning there is a full deliverance, a salvation so wide that it covers the whole area of our wants, yea, of our desires. A salvation awaits us whose sweep is eternity and immensity. All our capacious powers can wish are compassed within it, and of this the text says, "We were saved in hope." That grandest, widest salvation, we have seized by hope. Glory be to God for this.

This, then, is the subject of our present meditation: the hope which embraces the grander salvation for which we long.

I. Let us begin by recapitulating under the first head, **THE OBJECT OF THIS HOPE.** I have already gone over the principal points. Our hope, first of all, embraces *our own absolute perfection.* We have set our faces towards holiness, and by God's grace we will never rest till we attain it. Every sin that is in us is doomed, not only to be conquered, but to be slain. The grace of God does not help us to conceal our infirmities, but to destroy them. We deal with sin as Joshua did with the five kings when they went into the cave at Makkedah. While he was busy in the battle, he said, "Roll great stones upon the mouth of the cave." Our sins for awhile are shut up by restraining grace, as in a cave, and great stones are rolled at the cave's mouth; for they would escape if they could, and once more snatch at the reins: but in the power of the Holy Spirit we mean to deal with them more effectually by-and-by. "Bring out those five kings unto me," said Joshua, and "he smote them, and slew them, and hanged them." By God's grace we will never be satisfied till all our natural inclinations to sin shall be utterly destroyed, execrated and abhorred. We expect a day when there will not remain in us a taint of sin past, or an inclination for sin future. We shall still be possessed of will and freedom of choice, but we shall choose only good. Saints in heaven are not passive beings, driven along the path of obedience by a power which they cannot resist, but as intelligent agents they freely elect to be holiness unto the Lord. We shall enjoy for ever the glorious liberty of the children of God, which lies in the constant voluntary choice of that which should be chosen, and a consequent unbroken happiness. Ignorance also shall be gone, for we shall all be taught of the Lord, and we shall know, even as we are known. Perfect in service and clean delivered from all self-will and carnal desire, we shall be near our God and like him. As Watts has it,—

"Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again."

What a heaven this will be! I think, if I could be sure of getting free from every liability to sin, I would not have a choice as to where I should live, whether on earth or in heaven, at the bottom of the sea with Jonah, or in the low dungeon with Jeremiah. Purity is peace: holiness is happiness. He who is holy as God is holy will in consequence be as happy as God is happy. This is one main object of our hope.

The other object of our desire is *the redemption of the body*. Let us read the verses in which Paul teaches us that truth: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." When we die we shall leave our body behind us for awhile: we shall not, therefore, as to our entire manhood, be perfect in heaven till the resurrection: we shall be morally perfect, but as a complete man is made up of body as well as soul, we shall not be physically perfect, while one part of our person shall remain in the tomb. When the resurrection trumpet shall sound, this body will rise, but it will rise redeemed; and as our soul regenerated is very different from our soul under the bondage of sin, so the body when it is risen will be widely different from the body as it now is. The infirmities caused by sickness and age will be unknown among the glorified, for they are as the angels of God. None shall enter into glory halt or maimed, or decrepit or malformed. You will have no blind eye there, my sister; no deaf ear there, my brother; there shall be no quivering of paralysis or wasting of consumption. There we shall possess everlasting youth; the body which is sown in weakness shall be raised in power, and shall at once fly upon the errands of its Lord. Paul says, "It is sown a natural (or soulish) body," fit for the soul; "it is raised a spiritual body," fit for the spirit, the highest nature of man. I suppose we shall inhabit such a body as cherubs wear when they fly upon the wings of the wind; or such as may be fit for a seraph when like a flame of fire he flashes at Jehovah's bidding. Whatever it is, poor frame of mine, thou shalt be very much changed from what thou art now. Thou art the shrivelled bulb, which shall be put into the earth, but thou shalt arise a glorious flower, a golden cup to hold the sunlight of Jehovah's face. The greatness of thy glory thou knowest not as yet, except that thou shalt be fashioned like the glorious body of the Lord Jesus. This is the second object of our hope, a glorified body to consort with our purified spirit.

Viewed in another light, the object of our hope is this—that we shall *enter upon our inheritance*. Paul saith, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God; joint heirs with Christ." Whether we have little or much in this life our estate is nothing when compared with that which we have in reversion, secured to us against the day when we shall come of age. The fulness of God is the heritage of the saints: all that can make a man blessed, and noble, and complete is laid up in store for us. Measure, if you can, the inheritance of the Christ, who is heir of all things! What must be the portion of the well-beloved Son of the Highest? Whatever that may be, it is ours; for we are joint heirs with Christ. We shall be with him and behold his glory; we shall wear his image, we shall sit upon his throne. I cannot tell you more, for my words are poverty-stricken. I wish we all meditated upon what the Scripture reveals upon this subject till we knew all that can be known. Our hope looks for many things, yea for all things. Rivers of pleasure, of pleasures for evermore are flowing for us at God's right hand.

Paul speaks of *"the glory which shall be revealed in us,"* and tells us in another place that it is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight

of glory." What a word is that,—Glory! Glory is to be ours. Even ours, poor sinners as we are. Grace is sweet, but what must glory be? And it is to be revealed in us, and about us, and over us, and through us to all eternity.

Paul also speaks of "*the glorious liberty of the children of God.*" O charming word, liberty! We love it even as we hear it rung from the silver bugles of those who fight with tyrants; but what will it be when the trumpets of heaven shall proclaim eternal jubilee to every spiritual bondsman! Liberty? the liberty of the children of God! Liberty to enter into the holiest, to dwell in God's presence, and behold his face for ever and ever.

The apostle speaks also of "*the manifestation of the sons of God.*" Here we are hidden away in Christ as gems in a casket; by-and-by we are to be revealed as jewels in a crown. As Christ had his time of manifestation to the Gentiles after he had for awhile been hidden, so we who are now unknown are to have a manifestation before men and angels. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." What our manifestation shall be, O my brothers and sisters, I cannot tell you; eye hath not seen it, nor ear heard it, neither hath it entered into the heart of man; and though God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit, yet how small a part of that revelation have our spirits been able to receive. I suppose that only he who has seen the home of the perfect can tell us what it is like, and I conceive that even he could not do so, for language could not set it forth. When Paul was in Paradise he heard words, but he does not tell us what they were, for he says they were not lawful for a man to utter: they were too divine for mortal tongue. Not yet, not yet, but by-and-by the object of our hopes shall be clear to us. Do not think the less of it because we say by-and-by, for the interval of time is a trifling matter. It will soon be gone. What are a few months or years? What if a few hundred years should intervene before the resurrection? They will soon have swept by us like the wing of a bird, and then! Oh, then! The invisible shall be seen, the unutterable shall be heard, the eternal shall be ours for ever and ever. This is our hope.

II. Let us now muse upon THE NATURE OF THIS HOPE. We are saved in hope. What kind of hope is it in which we are saved?

First, our hope consists of three things—belief, desire, expectancy.

Our hope of being clean delivered from sin as to our soul, and rescued from all infirmity as to our body, arises out of a solemn assurance that it shall be so. The revelation of him who hath brought life and immortality to light bears witness to us that we also shall obtain glory and immortality. We shall be raised in the image of Christ, and shall partake in his glory. This is our belief because Christ is risen and glorified, and we are one with him. This also we desire, O how ardently! We so desire it that we at times wish to die that we may enter into it. At all times, but especially when we get a glimpse of Christ, our soul pines to be with him. This desire is accompanied with confident expectation. We as much expect to see the glory of Christ, and to share it, as we expect to see to-morrow morning: nay, perhaps we shall not see to-morrow's sun, but we shall certainly see the King

in his beauty in the land that is very far off. We believe it, we desire it, and we expect it. That is the nature of our hope. It is not an indefinite, hazy, groundless wish that things may turn out all right, such as those have who say, "I hope it will go well with me," though they live carelessly, and seek not after God; but it is a hope made up of right knowledge, firm belief, spiritual desire, and warranted expectancy.

This hope is grounded upon the word of God. God has promised us this; therefore do we believe it, desire it, and expect it. He has said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and the widest sense that we can give to that word "saved" must be God's sense of it, since his thoughts are always above our thoughts. We expect God to do as he has said to the fullest extent of his promise, for he will never run back from his word, nor fail in his engagement. We have committed our souls to the keeping of the Saviour, who has declared that he will save his people from their sins. We are trusting in our Redeemer, and our belief is that our Redeemer liveth, and that when he shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, though after our skin worms destroy this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God. Many and precious are the words of God to the same effect, and we lay hold upon them, being certain that what he has promised he is able also to perform. We shall die without a doubt of rising again, even as we have already committed to the dust many of our beloved ones in sure and certain hope of their resurrection to eternal life. As the farmer drops his grain into the ground, and does not doubt to see it rise again, so do we bury the bodies of the saints, and so shall we resign our own bodies, in the certain expectation that they shall as surely live again as they have lived at all. This is a hope worth having, for it is grounded on the word of God, the faithfulness of God, and his power to carry out his own promise, and therefore it is a hope most sure and steadfast, which maketh no man ashamed who hath it.

This hope is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. We should never have known this hope if the Holy Ghost had not kindled it in our bosoms. Ungodly men have no such hope, and never will have. It is only when men are renewed that this hope enters into them, the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. And herein do I exult with joy unspeakable, for if my hope of perfection and immortality has been wrought in me by God, then it must be fulfilled, for the Lord never could inspire a hope which should put his people to shame. The true God never gave men a false hope. That cannot be. The God of hope, who has taught thee, my brother, to expect salvation from sin and all its effects, will do unto thee according to the expectation which he has himself excited; therefore be thou very confident, and patiently wait the joyful day of the Lord's appearing.

This hope operates in us in a holy manner, as every gracious and holy thing that comes from God must do. It purifies us, as saith John, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as God is pure." We are so certain of this inheritance that we prepare for it by putting off all things contrary to it, and putting on all things which suit it. We endeavour to live as in the prospect of glory. How often has it occurred to me, and I doubt not to you, my brothers, to say of such and such a thing, "How will this look in the day of judgment?" And we

have done this act of generosity or that act of consecration, not because we cared a whit what men would think of it, but because we looked at it in the light of the coming glory. To us the grandest stimulus is that there is laid up for us a crown of life that fadeth not away.

This blessed hope makes us feel that it is a shame for us to sin, a shame that princes of the blood imperial of the skies should dabble in the mire like children of the gutter. We would fain live as those who are destined to dwell in the blaze of the light ineffable. We cannot walk in darkness, for we are to dwell in a splendour before which the sun grows pale; in the very Godhead itself are we to baptize ourselves in fellowship. Shall we, therefore, be the slaves of Satan, or the serfs of sin? God forbid! This blessed hope draws us towards God, and lifts us out of the pit of sin.

III. Having described the object and the nature of this blessed hope, I come more closely still to the text to observe THE ANTICIPATORY POWER OF THIS HOPE, for the apostle says in our text, "We were saved in hope"; that is to say, we did get the greater salvation, about which we are now speaking, when we were taught to know this hope. We obtained the first part of salvation, the forgiveness of sin, and justification of our persons, *by faith*, and we have fellowship with God, and access into countless blessings *by faith*: some of us are as conscious of this as that we eat and drink. But, beside all this, we have *in hope* the fuller range of salvation, total deliverance of the soul from sin, and complete redemption of the body from pain and death. We have this salvation *in hope*; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. How is this?

Why, first, hope *saw it all secured by the promise of grace*. As soon as ever we believed in Christ our faith secured forgiveness, and we cried, "I am not yet free from tendencies to sin, but inasmuch as I have believed in Christ unto salvation I shall surely be perfected, for Christ could not have come to give me a partial and imperfect salvation: he will perfect that which concerneth me." Thus hope saw within the promise of salvation much that as yet was not actually experienced. Knowing that the whole of the promise is of equal certainty, hope expected the future mercy as surely as faith enjoyed the present blessing.

Moreover, *hope saw the full harvest in the firstfruits*. When sin was subdued by grace, hope expected to see it utterly exterminated. When the Holy Spirit came to dwell in the body, hope concluded that the body would be delivered as surely as the soul. The moment that faith introduced hope into the heart she sang, "I have the complete salvation—not in actual enjoyment, but in sure reversion in Christ Jesus." Hope waved the first sheaf, and so took possession of the harvest. Ask any farmer who holds up a little handful of ripe wheat—ears whether he has ripe wheat, and he tells you that it is even so. "But you have not reaped it yet." "No, not yet, but it is mine, and in due season I shall reap it: these full ears are a full assurance of the existence of the wheat, and of the fact that it is ripening." So when God gave to you and me love to Jesus and deliverance from the dominion of evil, these firstfruits betokened a perfect salvation yet to be revealed in us. Our first joy was the tuning of our harps for everlasting song. Our first peace was the morning light of a never-ending day. When first we saw Christ,

and worshipped him, our adoration was the first bowing before the throne of God and of the Lamb. So that in hope we were saved: it brought us the principle of perfection, the pledge of immortality, the commencement of glorification.

Moreover, hope is so sure about this coming favour that *she reckons it as obtained*. You get an advice from a merchant with whom you have traded beyond sea: he says, "I have procured the goods you have ordered, and will send them by the next vessel; which will probably arrive at such a time." Another trader calls in and asks you whether you wish to buy such goods; and you reply, "No, I have them." Have you spoken the truth? Certainly; for though you have them not in your warehouse, they are invoiced to you; you know they are on the way, and you are so accustomed to trust your foreign correspondent, that you regard the goods as yours. The deed is done that makes them yours. So it is with heaven, with perfection, with immortality: the deed is done which makes these the heritage of saints. I have advices from One whom I cannot doubt, even my Lord, that he has gone to heaven to prepare a place for me, and that he will come again and receive me to himself. So sure is hope of this fact, that she reckons it, and makes comparisons and draws practical conclusions. A good old proverb tells us, "Never reckon your chickens before they are hatched," but here is a case in which you may reckon as accurately while the bird is in the egg as when it is fledged, for the apostle says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." He is so sure of it that he keeps a debtor and creditor account about it: he puts down the sufferings of this present time in his expenditure and the glory which shall be revealed among his assets, and he declares that the one is so vast, and the other so utterly insignificant as not to be worth notice.

Nay, he is not only so sure as to reckon upon it, but to *groan after it*. We that are in this body do groan for the full adoption. Our groanings do not arise from doubt, but from eagerness: we are urged by our confident expectancy to vehemence of desire. It is idle to cry for that which you will never have. The child is foolish which cries for the moon. But to groan for what I am sure to have is proper and fit, and shows the strength of my faith.

The apostle is so sure of it that he even *triumphs* in it. He says that we are more than conquerors through him that loved us—that is to say, although we are not perfect yet, and although our body is not delivered from pain, yet we are so sure of perfection and complete deliverance that we joyfully endure all things, triumphing over every difficulty. Friend, you will not be poor many weeks longer: you shall dwell where the streets are paved with gold. Your head will not ache many months longer, for it shall be surrounded with a coronet of glory and of bliss. Never mind shame, they will not be able to laugh at you long: you shall be at the right hand of God, even the Father, and the glory of Christ shall clothe you, world without end. Oh, it is an infinite blessing to have such a hope, and to be so sure of it as to anticipate its joys before they actually come to us. "We were saved in hope."

IV. Let us for a moment observe THE PROPER SPHERE OF HOPE.

The sphere of hope is "things not seen." Hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth why doth he yet hope for? Therefore, brethren, a Christian's real possession is not what he sees. Suppose God prospers him in this world and he has riches: let him be grateful, but let him confess that these are not his treasure. One hour with the Lord Jesus Christ will bring more satisfaction to the believer than the largest measure of wealth. Although he may have been prospered in this world, the saint will ridicule the idea of making the world his portion. A thousand worlds with all the joy which they could yield are as nothing compared with our appointed inheritance. Our hope does not deal with trifles; it leaves the mice of the barn to the owls, and soars on eagle wings where nobler joys await her.

" Beyond, beyond this lower sky,
Up where eternal ages roll;
Where solid pleasures never die,
And fruits immortal feast the soul."

But it is clear that we do not at present enjoy these glorious things for which we hope. The worldling cries, "Where is your hope?" and we confess that we do not see the objects of our hope. For instance, we could not claim to be already perfect, neither do we expect to do so while we are in this body, but we believe that we shall be perfected in the image of Christ at the time appointed of the Father. By no means is our body free from infirmity at this moment, aches and pains and weariness remind us that the body is under death because of sin; yet our firm conviction is that we shall bear the image of the heavenly even as we now bear the image of the earthly. These are subjects of hope, and therefore outside of present experience. Let us not be cast down because it is so: we must have something reserved for hope to feed on. We cannot have all of heaven and yet remain on earth. Dearly beloved, if you feel tormented by indwelling sin, and your holiness seems battered and blotted, yet be fully persuaded that he who has promised is able to perform.

Away, then, with judging by what you do, or see, or feel, or are. Rise into the sphere of the things which shall be. Can you not do that? When there is no joy in the present, there is an infinite joy in the future. Do not say, "Oh, but it is a long way off." It is not so. Many among you are sixty, seventy, or even eighty years of age; your time for the sight of Christ in your disembodied state cannot be far away, for the thread of life is snapping. Some of us are in middle age, but as we have already reached the average of life, we are bound to reckon that our lease is far advanced; and as so many are snatched away in their prime, we may at any moment be caught up to the land for which we hope. We ought not to fret about what we shall do ten years hence, for it is very likely that we shall by that time have entered into the promised rest, and shall be serving the Lord day and night in his temple, and beholding his face with joy unspeakable. Even suppose that any of us should be doomed to exile from heaven for another fifty years, the time of our sojourn will soon fly away. Let us labour to our utmost for the glory of God while we are here, for the moments flash away. Do you not recollect this time last year when autumn's ripeness was all around? It seems but the other day. You boys and girls

think it a long year, but the old folks are of another opinion. We have no long years now that we are growing grey. For me time travels so fast that its axles are hot with speed. Fear cries—Oh for a little breathing space! But hope answers,—No, let the years fly, we shall be home the sooner. There is but a step between us and heaven; do not let us worry ourselves about things below. We are like people in an express train who see a disagreeable sight in the fields, but it is gone before they have time to think of it. If there should be some discomfort in the carriage, if they have been put into a third-class compartment when they had a first-class ticket they do not trouble if it is a short journey. "See," says one, "we have just passed the last station, and shall be in the terminus directly: never mind." Let us project ourselves into the future. We shall not need much dynamite of imagination to send us upward: we can leap that little distance by hope, and seat ourselves among the thrones above. Resolve, my brethren, that, at least for to-day, you will not tarry in this cloudy, earth-bound time, but will mount unto the bright, cloudless eternity. O to leave these turbid streams and bathe in the river of hope, whose crystal floods flow from the pure fountain of divine joy.

V. Our time has fled, and we must close by merely glancing at THE EFFECT OF THIS HOPE, which is thus described: "Then do we with patience wait for it." We wait, and must wait, but not as criminals for execution; our tarrying is rather that of the bride for the wedding. We wait with patience, constancy, desire, and submission. The joy is sure to come, we have no doubt about it: therefore we do not complain and murmur, as though God had missed his appointment, and put us to needless delay. No, the time which God has settled is the best, and we are content with it. We would neither desire to tarry here nor to depart at any time but the Lord's. Dear Rowland Hill is said to have searched out an aged friend who was dying, that he might send a message up to heaven, to John Berridge and other beloved Johns who had gone before him, and he playfully added a word of hope that the Master had not forgotten old Rowland, and would let him come home in due time; yet he never dreamed that he could be passed over. Among the last expressions of the famous John Donne was this—"I were miserable if I might not die." This would be a horrible world, indeed, if we were doomed to live in it for ever. Fancy such a dreadful certainty before us. I saw a gentleman some time ago who told me that he would never die, but should at certain intervals cast off the effects of age and start on a new term of life. He kindly came to tell me how I might enjoy the same favour; but as I am not ambitious of earthly immortality, such an offer did not tempt me. He told me I could renew my youth, and become young again for the space of hundreds of years, but I refused his conditions, and declined the boon at any price. I have no desire for anything of the sort; my most comfortable prospect about this life is that it will melt away into life eternal. It seems to me that the most joyous thing about the most joyous life is that it leads upward to another and a better state. I am not unhappy or discontented, but since I have a good hope of perfection for my soul and body, and a sure prospect of face-to-face fellowship with God, how can I speak well of anything which divides me from my joy? Yes, it

will come, surely come; therefore let us patiently wait for it. When Satan would buffet us, when temptation would overcome us, when affliction would wear us down, when doubts would torment us, let us bear the temporary trial with constancy, for we shall soon be out of range of gunshot. The consummation shall come, and must come, and when it cometh we shall remember no more our travail for joy that our heaven is born to us and we to it.

Now, then, ye that do not believe in God, tell us what your hope is. Publish it in the world, and let all men estimate it. What is your hope? To live long? Yes, and what then? To bring up a family? Yes, and what then? To see them comfortably settled in life? Yes, and what then? To be a grandfather to a numerous progeny? Yes, and what then? To reach extreme old age in peaceful retirement? Yes, and what then? The curtain falls. Let me lift it. The cemetery. The throne of God. Sentence on your soul. The trumpet of resurrection. Final doom. Body and soul in hell for ever. You have no better prospect. Pray look out of the window, and see what is to be seen. The Lord have mercy upon you, and give you a better hope. As for you believers in Christ, I charge you begin to sing to-day the sonnets of the hereafter. Charm your pilgrim life with the minstrelsy of hope.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Rom. viii. 1—25.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—874, 848, 873.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL." Edited by C. H. SPURGEON.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LOVE'S LABOURS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."—1 Corinthians xiii. 7.

THE grace of charity, or love, of which so much is most admirably spoken in this chapter, is absolutely essential to true godliness. So essential is it that, if we have everything beside, but have not charity, it profiteth us nothing. The absence of charity is absolutely fatal to vital godliness; so saith the Holy Ghost in this chapter. When, then, you read the apostle's high encomiums of charity, do not say, "This is a fancy virtue to which certain special saints have attained, and we are bound to admire them for it, but we need not imitate them." Far from it. This charity is the common, everyday livery of the people of God. It is not the prerogative of a few; it must be the possession of all. Do not, therefore, however lofty the model may be, look up to it as though you could not reach it; you must reach it. It is put before you not only as a thing greatly desirable, but as absolutely needful; for if you excelled in every spiritual gift, yet if you had not this all the rest would profit you nothing whatever. One would think that such excellent gifts might benefit us a little, but no, the apostle sums them all up, and saith of the whole, "it profiteth me nothing." I pray that this may be understood of us at the very beginning, lest we should manage to slip away from the truth taught us by the Holy Ghost in this place, and should excuse ourselves from being loving by the notion that we are so inconsiderable that such high virtue cannot be required of us, or so feeble that we cannot be expected to attain to it. You must attain it, or you cannot enter into eternal life, for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, and the Spirit of Christ is sure to beget the charity of our text, which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

What does this teach us at the outset, but that a salvation which leads to this must be of God, and must be wrought in us by his power? Such a comely grace can never grow out of our fallen nature. Shall such a clean thing as this be brought out of an unclean? This glorious salvation unto pure love must be grasped by faith, and wrought in us

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by the operation of the Spirit of God. If we consider salvation to be a little thing, we bring it, as it were, within the sphere of human possibility, but if we set it forth in its true proportions as involving the possession of a pure, loving, elevated state of heart, then we perceive that it is a divine wonder. When we estimate the renewed nature aright we cry, "This is the finger of God," and right gladly do we then subscribe to Jonah's creed, "Salvation is of the Lord." If charity be in any man and abound, God must have the glory of it; for assuredly it was never attained by mere natural effort, but must have been bestowed by that same hand which made the heavens. So then, brethren, I shall hope when I conclude to leave upon your minds the impression of your need of the grace of God for the attainment of love. I would not discourage you, but I would have you feel how great a labour lies before you, and how impossible it will be unless you are girt with a strength beyond your own. This shall be your solace that if it cannot be the outcome of your own effort, yet "the fruit of the Spirit is love," and the Spirit is ready and willing to bear fruit in us also.

Notice then, first, *the multitude of love's difficulties*; it has to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things: secondly, observe *the triumph of love's labour*; it does all these four things, it "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things": and then, thirdly, this will bring us back to the point we have started from, *the sources of love's energy*, and how it is she is able thus to win her fourfold victory over countless difficulties.

I. Consider well the MULTITUDE OF LOVE'S DIFFICULTIES. When the grace of God comes into a man he is born at once to love. He that loveth is born of God, and he that is born of God loveth. He loveth him that begat, even God, and he loveth him that is begotten of him, even all the saved ones. He commences to obey the great command to love his neighbour as himself. His motto is no longer that of an earthly kingdom, *Dieu et mon droit*—God and my right; but he bears another word on his escutcheon, *Dieu et mon frère*—God and my brother.

No sooner is love born than she finds herself at war. Everything is against her, for the world is full of envy, hate, and ill-will. I would warn the most loving-hearted that they have entered upon a war for peace, a strife for love: they are born to hate hatred, and to contend against contention. As the lily among thorns, so is love among the sons of men. As the hind among the dogs, so is charity among the selfish multitude.

Evidently the difficulties of love are many, for the apostle speaks of them as "all things," and as if this were not enough he repeats the words, and sets forth the opposing armies as four times "all things." I do not know whether you can calculate this mighty host. "All things" would seem to comprehend as much as can be, but here in the text you have this amount multiplied by four. For, my brother, you will have to contend with all that is within yourself. Nothing in your original nature will help you. God has put within you a new life, but the old life seeks to smother it. You will find it a severe struggle to master yourself, and if you succeed therein you will be a conqueror indeed. Besides that you have to contend with "all things" in the persons whom you are called

upon to love. You must have fervent charity towards the saints, but you will find very much about the best of them which will try your patience; for, like yourself, they are imperfect, and they will not always turn their best side towards you, but sometimes sadly exhibit their infirmities. Be prepared, therefore, to contend with "all things" in them. As for the ungodly whom you are to love to Christ, you will find everything in them that will oppose the drawings of your love, for they, like yourself, by nature are born in sin, and they are rooted in their iniquities. When you have mastered that kind of "all things" you will have to contend with "all things" in *the world*, for the world lieth in the wicked one, and all its forces run towards self, and contention, and hate. Every man's hand is against his fellow, and few there be who honour the gentle laws of love; they know not that divine charity which "seeketh not her own." The seed of the serpent is at enmity with all that is kind, and tender, and self-sacrificing, for these are the marks of the woman's seed. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. And then remember that "all things" *in hell* are against you. What a seething mass of rebellious life, all venomous with hate, is seen in the regions of darkness. The prince of the power of the air leads the van, and the host of fallen spirits eagerly follow him, like bloodhounds behind their leader. All these evil spirits will endeavour to create dissension, and enmity, and malice, and oppression among men, and the soldier of love must wrestle against all these. See, O my brother, what a battle is yours! Speak of crusades against the Paynim, what a crusade is this against hate and evil. Yet we shrink not from the fray.

Happily, though love has many difficulties, *it overcomes them all*, and overcomes them four times. There is such vitality in evil that it leaps up from the field whereon it seemed to be slain, and rages with all its former fury. First, we overcome evil by *patience*, which "beareth all things." Let the injury be inflicted, we will forgive it, and not be provoked: even seventy times seven will we bear in silence. If this suffice not, by God's grace we will overcome by *faith*: we trust in Jesus Christ, we rely upon our principles, we look for divine succour, and so we "believe all things." We overcome a third time by *hope*: we rest in expectation that gentleness will win, and that long-suffering will wear out malice, for we look for the ultimate victory of everything that is true and gracious, and so we "hope all things." We finish the battle by *perseverance*: we abide faithful to our resolve to love, we will not be irritated into unkindness, we will not be perverted from generous, all-forgiving affection, and so we win the battle by steadfast non-resistance. We have set our helm towards the port of love, and towards it we will steer, come what may. Baffled often, love "endureth all things."

Yes, brethren, and love *conquers on all four sides*. Love does, as it were, make a hollow square, and she sets the face of her warriors towards all quarters of the compass. Does God seem himself to smite love with afflictions? She "beareth all things." Do her fellow Christians misrepresent her, and treat her ill? She believes everything that is good about them, and nothing that is injurious. Do the wicked rise against her? When she tries to convert them, do they return evil for good? She turns her hopefulness to the front in that direction, and hopes that yet the Spirit of God will bring them to a better mind. And

does it happen that all her spiritual foes attack her with temptation and desperate insinuations? She lifteth up the banner of patience against them, and by the power of God's grace she putteth the infernal enemy to the rout, for she "endureth all things." What a brave mode of battle is this! Is not love a man of war? Is it not invincible? Hear love's heroic cry as she shouts her defiance,—

"Come one, come all, this rock shall fly,
From its firm base as soon as I."

If once taught in the school of Christ to turn love to every point of the compass, and so to meet every assault against our heart, we have learned the secret of victory.

It seems to me that I might read my text as if it said that *love conquers in all stages of her life*. She begins in conversion, and straightway those that mark her birth are angry, and the powers of evil are at once aroused to seek her destruction. Then she "beareth all things." Let them mock, love never renders railing for railing: Isaac is not to be provoked by Ishmael's jeers.

She gathers strength and begins to tell out to others what she knows of her Lord and his salvation. She "believeth all things," and so she confesses her faith, and her fellow Christians are confirmed by her witness. It is her time of energy, and so she tries to woo and win others, by teaching them the things which she believes.

She advances a little farther; and, though often disappointed by the unbelief of men and the coldness of her fellow Christians, she nevertheless "hopes all things," and pushes on in the expectation of winning more of them. Her dove's eyes see in the dark, and she advances to victory through ever-growing conflict.

Ay, and when infirmities thicken upon her, and old age comes, and she can do little else but sit still, and bear and believe and hope, she still perseveres, and accepts even the stroke of death itself without complaining, for love "endureth all things."

I do not think I need say more upon the difficulties of love. I am sure that every experienced person knows that these difficulties are supreme, and that we require superlative grace if we are to master them. Love does not ask to have an easy life of it: self-love makes that her aim. Love denies herself, sacrifices herself, that she may win victories for God, and bring blessings on her fellow-men. Hers is no easy pathway, and hers shall be no tinsel crown.

II. Secondly, let us survey THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE'S LABOUR. Her labours are fourfold.

First, in *bearing all things*. The word here rendered "bear" might as correctly have been translated "cover." You that have the Revised Version will find in the margin, "Love covereth all things." "Covereth" is the meaning of the word in ordinary Greek, but Paul generally uses the word in the sense of "bear." Our translators, therefore, had to choose between the usual meaning and the Pauline usage, and they selected Paul's meaning, and put it down in the first place as "beareth," giving us in the margin the other sense of "covereth." The two ideas may be blended, if we understand it to mean that love bears all things in silence, concealing injuries as much as possible even from herself.

Let us just think of this word "covers" *in reference to the brethren*. True love refuses to see faults, unless it be that she may kindly help in their removal. Love has no wish to see faults. Noah's younger son discovered and declared the shame of his father, but his other sons took a garment and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father: after this fashion does love deal with the sins of her brethren. She painfully fears that there may be something wrong, but she is loath to be convinced of it: she ignores it as long as she can, and wishes that she could deny it altogether. Love covers; that is, it never proclaims the errors of good men. There are busybodies abroad who never spy out a fault in a brother but they must needs hurry off to their next neighbour with the savoury news, and then they run up and down the street as though they had been elected common criers. It is by no means honourable to men or women to set up to be common informers. Yet I know some who are not half so eager to publish the gospel as to publish slander. Love stands in the presence of a fault, with a finger on her lip. If anyone is to smite a child of God, let it not be a brother. Even if a professor be a hypocrite, love prefers that he should fall by any hand rather than her own. Love covers all injuries by being silent about them, and acting as if they had never been. She sitteth alone, and keepeth silence. To speak and publish her wrong is too painful for her, for she fears to offend against the Lord's people. She would rather suffer than murmur, and so, like a sheep before her shearers, she is dumb under injury.

I would, brothers and sisters, that we could all imitate the pearl oyster. A hurtful particle intrudes itself into its shell, and this vexes and grieves it. It cannot eject the evil, and what does it do but *cover* it with a precious substance extracted out of its own life, by which it turns the intruder into a pearl. Oh, that we could do so with the provocations we receive from our fellow Christians, so that pearls of patience, gentleness, long-suffering, and forgiveness might be bred within us by that which else had harmed us. I would desire to keep ready for my fellow Christians, a bath of silver, in which I could electroplate all their mistakes into occasions for love. As the dripping well covers with its own deposit all that is placed within its drip, so would love cover all within its range with love, thus turning even curses into blessings. Oh that we had such love that it would cover all, and conceal all, so far as it is right and just that it should be covered and concealed.

As to *bearing* all, taking the words as they stand in our version, I wish to apply the text mainly to our trials in seeking the conversion of *the unconverted*. Those who love the souls of men must be prepared to cover much when they deal with them, and to bear much from them in silence. When I begin to seek the conversion of anyone, I must try as much as ever I can to ignore any repulsiveness that there may be in his character. I know that he is a sinner, else I should not seek his salvation; but if he happens to be one who has fallen very low in the esteem of others, I must not treat him as such, but cover his worst points. You cannot possibly bring the Samaritan woman who has had five husbands into a right state of mind by "wondering that he spake with the woman." Thus the disciples acted, but not so their Master,

for he sat on the well and talked with her, and made himself her willing companion that he might be her gracious Saviour; he ignored her sin so far as to converse with her for her good.

You will not long have begun this holy work before you will discover in the heart you seek to win much ignorance of the gospel. Bear with it, and bring forward the text which sheds light on that darkness, and teach the truth which will remove that error. Ere long you will have to contend with hardness of heart, for when a man knows the truth he is not always willing to receive it. Bear it, and be not vexed. Did you not expect the heart to be hard? Do not you know what business you are upon? You are sent to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. Be not astonished if these things should not prove to be child's play. In addition to this perhaps you will have ridicule poured upon you; your attempts to convert will be converted into jests. Bear it; bear all things! Remember how the multitude thrust out the tongue at your Lord and Master when he was dying, and be not you so proud as to think yourself too good to be laughed at. Still speak concerning Christ, and whatever happens, bear all things. I will not attempt to make a catalogue of your provocations, you shall make one yourself after you have tried to convert men to Christ; but all that you can possibly meet with is included in my text, for it says, "beareth *all things*." If you should meet with some extraordinary sinner who opens his mouth with cruel speeches such as you have never heard before, and if by attempting to do him good you only excite him to ribaldry and blasphemy, do not be astonished; have at him again, for charity "beareth all things," whatever they may be. Push on and say, "Yes, all this proves to me how much you want saving. You are my man; if I get you to Christ there will be all the greater glory to God." O blessed charity, which can thus cover all things and bear all things for Christ's sake.

Do you want an example of it? Would you see the very mirror and perfection of the charity that beareth all things? Behold your divine Lord. Oh, what he has covered! It is a tempting topic, but I will not dwell on it. How his glorious righteousness, his wondrous splendour of love, has covered all our faults and all their consequences, treating us as if he saw no sin in Jacob, neither perversity in Israel. Think what he bore when he came unto his own and his own received him not! What a covering was that when he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a pitying sight of the fearful misery of man our Lord Jesus had when holy tears bedewed those sacred eyes! What a generous blindness to their infamous cruelty he manifested when he prayed for his bloodthirsty enemies. O beloved, you will never be tempted, and taunted, and tried as he was; yet in your own shorter measure may you possess that love which can silently bear all things for the elect's sake and for Christ's sake, that the multitude of the redeemed may be accomplished, and that Christ through you may see of the travail of his soul.

Now let us look at the second of love's great labours. You have heard of the labours of Hercules, but the fabulous hero is far outdone by the veritable achievements of love. Love works miracles which only grace can enable her to perform. Here is the second of them—

love "believeth all things." In reference, first, to our fellow Christians, love always believes the best of them. I wish we had more of this faith abroad in all the churches, for a horrid blight falls upon some communities through suspicion and mistrust. Though everything may be pure and right, yet certain weak minds are suddenly fevered with anxiety through the notion that all is wrong and rotten. This unholy mistrust is in the air, a blight upon all peace: it is a sort of fusty mildew of the soul by which all sweet perfume of confidence is killed. The best man is suspected of being a designing knave, though he is honest as the day, and the smallest fault or error is frightfully exaggerated, till we seem to dwell among criminals and to be all villains together. If I did not believe in my brethren I would not profess to be one of them. I believe that with all their faults they are the best people in the world, and that, although the church of God is not perfect, yet she is the bride of One who is. I have the utmost respect for her, for her Lord's sake. The Roman matron said "Where my husband is Caius I am Caia"; where Christ is King, she who stands at his right hand is "the queen in gold of Ophir." God forbid that I should rail at her of whom her Lord says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." True love believes good of others as long as ever it can, and when it is forced to fear that wrong has been done, love will not readily yield to evidence, but she gives the accused brother the benefit of many a doubt. When the thing is too clear, love says, "Yes, but the friend must have been under very strong temptation, and if I had been there I dare say I should have done worse;" or else love hopes that the erring one may have offended from a good though mistaken motive; she believes that the good man must have been mistaken, or he would not have acted so. Love, as far as she can, believes in her fellows. I know some persons who habitually believe everything that is bad, but they are not the children of love. Only tell them that their minister or their brother has killed his wife, and they would believe it immediately, and send out for a policeman: but if you tell them anything good of their neighbour, they are in no such hurry to believe you. Did you ever hear of gossips tittle-tattling approval of their neighbours? I wish the chatters would take a turn at exaggerating other people's virtues, and go from house to house trumping up pretty stories of their acquaintances. I do not recommend lying even in kindness, but that side of it would be such a novelty that I could almost bear with its evils for a change. Love, though it will not speak an untruth in praise of another, yet has a quick eye to see the best qualities of others, and it is habitually a little blind to their failings. Her blind eye is to the fault, and her bright is for the excellence. Somewhere or other I met with an old legend,—I do not suppose it to be literally true, but its spirit is correct. It is said that, once upon a time, in the streets of Jerusalem, there lay a dead dog, and everyone kicked at it and reviled it. One spoke of its currish breed, another of its lean and ugly form, and so forth; but one passed by who paused a moment over the dead dog, and said, "What white teeth it has." Men said, as he went on his way, "That is Jesus of Nazareth." Surely it is ever our Lord's way to see good points wherever he can. Brethren, think as well as

you can even of a dead dog. If you should ever be led into disappointments and sorrows by thinking too well of your fellow-men, you need not greatly blame yourself. I met, in Anthony Farrindon's Sermons, a line which struck me. He says the old proverb has it, "Humanum est errare," to err is human, but, saith he, when we err by thinking too kindly of others we may say, "*Christianum est errare*," it is Christian to err in such a fashion. I would not have you credulous, but I would have you trustful, for suspicion is a cruel evil. Few fall into the blessed error of valuing their fellow Christians at too high a rate.

In reference to the unconverted this is a very important matter. Love "believeth all things" in their case. She does not believe that the unconverted are converted, for, if so, she would not seek their conversion. She believes that they are lost and ruined by the Fall, but she believes that God can save them. Love believes that the precious blood of Christ can redeem the bondslaves of sin and Satan, and break their iron chains; she believes that the power of the Holy Spirit can change a heart of granite into a heart of flesh. Love, therefore, believing this, believes also that God can save this sinner by herself, and she therefore begins to speak to him, expecting that the word she speaks will be God's instrument of salvation. When she finds herself sitting next to a sinner, she believes that there was a necessity for her to be there, even as Christ must needs go through Samaria. She saith to herself, "Now will I tell to this poor soul what Christ hath done, for I believe that even out of my poor lips eternal life may flow, and in such a babe as I am God may perfect praise to his own glory." She does not refrain from preaching Christ through fear of failure, but she believes in the great possibilities which lie in the gospel and in the Spirit of God, and so she deals earnestly with the man next her. She believes in her own principles, she believes in the grace of God, she believes in the power of the Spirit of God, she believes in the force of truth, she believes in the existence of conscience, and so she is moved to set about her saving work. She believeth all things.

Brethren, do you want a model of this? Then I beseech you look to your divine Master once again. See him in the morning when the sheep are counted, missing one of them, and so full of faith is he that he can find the lost one, that he leaves the ninety and nine, and cheerfully enters the pathless wilderness. See how he bounds over the mountains! How he descends the ravines! He is seeking his sheep until he finds it, for he is fully assured that he shall find it. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, for his faith is great in the salvation of men, and he goes forth to it believing that sinners shall be saved. I delight in the deep, calm faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. He had no faith in man's goodness, for "he knew what was in man"; but he had great faith in what could be done in men and what could be wrought for them, and for the joy that was set before him in this he endured the cross, despising the shame. He had faith that grand things would come of his salvation—men would be purified, error would be driven out, falsehood would be slain, and love would reign supreme.

Here is the second grand victory of love, she "believeth all things." Herein let us exercise ourselves till we are skilled in it.

Love's third great labour is in "*hoping all things*." Love never

despairs. She believes in good things yet to come in her fellow-men, even if she cannot believe in any present good in them. Hope all things about your brethren. Suppose a friend is a member of the church, and you cannot see any clear signs of grace in him, hope all things about him. Many true believers are weak in faith, and the operations of grace are dim in them; and some are placed in positions where the grace they have is much hindered and hampered: let us take these things into consideration. It is hard to tell how little grace may yet suffice for salvation: it is not ours to judge. Hope all things, and if you should be forced to see sad signs in them, which make you fear that they have no grace, yet, remember that some of the brightest believers have had their faults, and grave ones too. Remember yourself, lest you also be tempted. If you cannot hope that these persons are saved at all, hope that they will be, and do all that you can to promote so blessed an end.

Hope all things. If thy brother has been very angry with thee without a cause, hope that thou wilt win him; and set about the task. If thou hast tried and failed, hope to succeed next time, and try again. Hope that though thou hast failed seven times, and he still speaks bitterly, yet in his heart he is really ashamed, or at least that he will be so very soon. Never despair of your fellow Christians.

As to the unconverted, you will never do anything with them unless you hope great things about them. When the good Samaritan found the poor man half dead, if he had not hoped about him he would never have poured in the oil and the wine, but would have left him there to die. Cultivate great hopefulness about sinners. Always hope of them that they will be saved yet: though no good signs are apparent in them. If you have done your best for them, and have been disappointed and defeated, still hope for them. Sometimes you will find cause for hope in the fact that they begin to attend a place of worship. Grasp at that, and say, "Who can tell? God may bless them." Or if they have long been hearers, and no good has come of it, still hope that the minister will one day have a shot at them, and the arrow shall pierce through the joints of the harness. When you last spoke to them there seemed a little tenderness: be thankful for it, and have hope. If there has been a little amendment in their life, be hopeful about them. Even if you can see nothing at all hopeful in them, yet hope that there may be something which you cannot see, and perhaps an effect has been produced which they are endeavouring to conceal. Hope because you are moved to pray for them. Get other people to pray for them, for as long as they have some one to pray for them their case is not given over. If you get others to pray, there will be another string to your bow. If they are very ill, and you cannot get at them, or they are on their dying beds, still have hope about them, and try to send them a message in some form or other. Pray the Lord to visit and save them; and always keep up your hope about them. Till they are dead let not your hope be dead.

Would you see a model of this? Ah, look at our blessed Lord, and all his hopefulness for us: how, despairing of none, he went after those whom others would have given up. If you ask a proof, remember how he went after you. Will you despair of anybody since Christ did not

despair of you? Wonders of grace belong to God, and all those wonders have been displayed in many among us. If you and I had been there when they brought the adulterous woman taken in the very act, I am afraid that we should have said, "This is too bad; put her away, she cannot be borne with." But oh, the hopefulness of the blessed Master when even to her he said, "Woman, where are thine accusers? Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more." What wonderful patience, and gentleness, and hopefulness our Lord displayed in all his converse with the twelve! It was a noble hopefulness in Christ which led him to trust Peter as he did: after he had denied his Master with oaths, our Lord trusted him to feed his sheep and lambs, and set him in the forefront of apostolic service. He has also had compassion on some of us, putting us into the ministry, and putting us in trust with the gospel, for he knew what love would do for us, and he was certain he could yet make something of us to his own glory.

The last victory of love is in *enduring all things*, by which I understand a patient perseverance in loving. This is perhaps the hardest work of all, for many people can be affectionate and patient for a time, but the task is to hold on year after year. I have known some men earnestly check their temper under provocation, and bear a great many slights, but at last they have said, "There is an end to everything: I am not going to put up with it any longer. I cannot stand it." Blessed be God, the love that Christ gives us endureth all things. As his love endured to the end, so does the love which the Spirit works in us endure to the end.

In reference first to our fellow Christians, love holds out under all rebuffs. You mean that I shall not love you, my good man, but I shall love you. You give me the rough side of your tongue, and make me see that you are not a very lovable person, but I can love you notwithstanding all. What? Will you do me a further unkindness? I will oppose you by doing you a greater kindness than before. You said a vile thing about me; I will not hear it, but if it be possible I will say a kind thing of you. I will cover you up with hot coals till I melt you; I will war against you with flames of love till your anger is consumed. I will master you by being kinder to you than you have been unkind to me. What hosts of misrepresentations and unkindnesses there are: but if you go on to be a true Christian you must endure all these. If you have to deal with people who will put up with nothing from you, take care to be doubly patient with them. What credit is there in bearing with those who bear with you? If your brethren are angry without a cause, be sorry for them, but do not let them conquer you by driving you into a bad temper. Stand fast in love; endure not some things, but all things, for Christ's sake; so shall you prove yourself to be a Christian indeed.

As to your dealing with the unconverted, if ever you go into the field after souls, be sure to carry your gun with you, and that gun is love. You gentlemen who go out shooting partridges and other birds at this time of the year, no doubt find it a pleasant pastime; but for real excitement, joy, and pleasure, commend me to soul-winning. What did our Lord say, "I will make you fishers of men." If you go out fishing for souls you will have to endure all things, for it will come to

pass that some whom you have been seeking for a long time will grow worse instead of better. Endure this among the all things. Those whom you seek to bless may seem to be altogether unteachable, they may shut their ears and refuse to hear you ; never mind, endure all things. They may grow sour and sullen, and revile you in their anger, but be not put about by them, let them struggle till they are wearied, and meanwhile do you quietly wait, saying to yourself, "I *must* save them." A warder who has to take care of insane persons will frequently be attacked by them, and have to suffer hard blows ; but what does he do ? Strike the patient and make a fight of it ? No, he holds him down and pins him fast ; but not in anger, for he pities him too much to be angry with him. Does a nurse with a delirious patient take any notice of his cross words, and grumbling, and outcries ? Not she. She says, "I must try to save this man's life," and so with great kindness she "endureth all things." If you were a fireman, and found a person in an upper room, and the house was on fire, would you not struggle with him rather than let him remain in the room and burn. You would say, "I will save you in spite of yourself." Perhaps the foolish body would call you names, and say, "Let me alone, why should you intrude into my chamber ?" But you would say, "Never mind my intrusion ; I will apologise afterwards for my rudeness, but you must be out of the fire first." I pray God give you this blessed unmannerliness, this sweet casting of all things to the wind, if by any means you may save some.

If you desire to see the mirror and the paragon of persevering endurance, look you there ! I wish you could see it. I wish these eyes could see the sight as I have sometimes seen it. Behold the cross ! See the patient Sufferer and that ribald multitude : they thrust out the tongue, they sneer, they jest, they blaspheme ; and there he hangs, triumphant in his patience, conquering the world, and death and hell by enduring "all things." O love, thou didst never sit on a throne so imperial as the cross, when there, in the person of the Son of God, thou didst all things endure. Oh that we might copy in some humble measure that perfect pattern which is here set before us. If you would be saviours, if you would bless your generation, let no unkindness daunt you ; let no considerations of your own character, or honour, or peace of mind keep you back, but of you may it be said, even as of your Lord, "He saved others, himself he could not save."

Have not I shown you four grand battles far excelling all the Waterloos, and Trafalgars, and Almas, and Inkermans on record ? Heroes are they that fight and win them, and the Lord God of love shall crown them.

III. I close by noting THE SOURCES OF LOVE'S ENERGY. The time is gone, as I thought it would be, but it has brought us round in a circle to where we started from. The Holy Ghost alone can teach men how to love, and give them power to do so. Love's art is learned at no other school but at the feet of Jesus, where the Spirit of love doth rest on those who learn of him. Beloved, the Spirit of God puts love into us, and helps us to maintain it, thus :—first, love wins these victories, for *it is her nature*. The nature of love is self-sacrifice. Love is the reverse of seeking her own. Love is intense ; love is burning ; therefore she burneth her way to victory. Love ! Look at it in the

mother. Is it any hardship to her to lose rest and peace and comfort for her child? If it costs her pain, she makes it pleasure by the ardour of her affection. It is the nature of love to court difficulties, and to rejoice in suffering for the beloved object. If you have fervent love to the souls of men, you will know how true this is.

Next to this, *love has four sweet companions*. There are with her tenderness that "beareth all things," faith that "believeth all things," hope that "hopeth all things," and patience which "endureth all things," and he that hath tenderness, and faith, and hope, and patience hath a brave quaternion of graces to guard him, and he need not be afraid. Best of all, *love sucks her life from the wounds of Christ*. Love can bear, believe, hope, and endure because Christ has borne, believed, and hoped, and endured for her. I have heard of one that had a twist: they say that he saw something that others never saw, and heard a voice that others never heard, and he became such a strange man that others wondered at him. Oh, that I had more and more of that most solemn twist which comes through feeling a pierced hand laid on my shoulder, and hearing in my ear a sorrowful voice, that selfsame voice which cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" I would see that vision and hear that voice, and then,—what then? Why, I must love; I must love; I must love. That would be the soul's strange bias and sweet twist. Love makes us love; love bought us, sought us, and brought us to the Saviour's feet, and it shall henceforth constrain us to deeds which else would be impossible. You have heard of men sometimes in a mad fit doing things that ordinary flesh and blood could never have performed. Oh to be distracted from selfishness by the love of Christ, and maddened into self-oblivion by a supreme passion for the Crucified. I know not how otherwise to put my thoughts into words so that they may hint at my burning meaning. May the Lord of love look into your very eyes with those eyes which once were red with weeping over human sin: may he touch your hands with those hands that were nailed to the cross, and impress the blessed nailmarks upon your feet, and then may he pierce your heart till it pour forth a life for love, and flow out in streams of kind desires, and generous deeds, and holy sacrifices for God and for his people. God grant it, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Corinthians xiii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—797, 264, 439.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOLINESS, THE LAW OF GOD'S HOUSE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“This is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house.”—Ezekiel xliii. 12.

I SHALL not enter into the immediate meaning of Ezekiel's vision. I believe that the house of which Ezekiel speaks is typical of the church of the living God. In it I see not so much the visible church as that spiritual, mystical church of Jesus Christ which is the one place of his abode. It is found in a state of grace on earth, and in full glory in heaven. Below it is the holy church militant, above it is the holy church triumphant.

The church is the only thing upon earth which can properly be called the house of God, for he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. The finest architecture could never constitute a proper shrine for Deity. Look to yon blue heavens, gaze upon the spangled vault of night, and view the ever-flashing, wide, and open sea, and tell me if any handiwork of man can rival the temple of nature. Peer into boundless space and see what a temple is already builded; within what walls would you hope to house the infinite Jehovah? He has deigned, however, to choose Zion, and to desire it for his habitation. The saints are builded together as a spiritual house, a habitation of God through the Spirit. He resides among his people, according to his promise, “I will dwell in them and walk in them.” Hence the church is the home of the Great Father, where he dwells in the midst of his family, and takes his rest. Hath he not said, “This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it”? As a man in his own house takes his ease and finds delight, so doth God take pleasure in them that fear him; “His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.”

The church is God's house, for there he makes himself known, and manifests himself as he does not unto the outside world. “In Judah is God known, his name is great in Israel.” His people know him for they are all taught of the Lord: none of them hath need to say to his neighbour “know the Lord,” for they all know him as

their Father, from the least even to the greatest. What sweet familiarities are enjoyed in the church! What holy intimacies between the great Father and his children, how tenderly does he unbosom himself so that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. His saints are a people near unto him: they have access to him at all times, for they dwell in his house, and are his own dearly beloved children. What more glorious thing can be said of the church than this—"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." Of what but the church, the true house of the Lord, could we read such words as these: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

The church is God's house, and therefore he provides for it even as a man cares for his own house, spends his strength for it, exercises his wisdom on its behalf, and is ever thoughtful over it. God doth lay out himself for his people. For this his Son hath both died and risen again. For this the Lord arranges the purposes of heaven; for this he works among the children of men. The Lord's portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance, to his chosen he has special regard. He will see to it that his spiritual house is not suffered to decay, or to be short of anything which makes for its comfort, security, and honour.

The Lord links his own name with the church as a man does with his house. It is the house of the Lord, and he is the Lord of the house. Beloved, it is the greatest honour that can happen to any man to be a member of the household of God. There are great houses in the world of long descent and of imperial rank, but what are they compared with the household of God? The one family in heaven and earth named by the name of Jesus has far more true glory about it than all the families of princes. I had rather be the meanest saint than the greatest emperor. Such honour have all the saints.

Now, brothers and sisters, if you and I have had the privilege to be admitted into God's house, and to be made a part of his family, it is exceedingly necessary that we should know the law of the house. This is desirable at our entrance, and equally necessary as long as we remain in the house of the Lord. Paul wrote to Timothy with this design "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God." To this end Ezekiel was sent of God to those who desired the favour of God. He was to show them the form of the house and the goings out thereof and the comings in thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they might keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them.

God's house is not lawless. It is the abode of liberty, but not of license. They that dwell in God's house are in his immediate presence, and our God is a consuming fire. He had need be holy who dwells with the thrice holy God. The Lord will be sanctified in them that come near to him, and if any enter the house to misbehave themselves, they will find that judgment begins at the house of God. How terrible are those words: "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy."

Come we, then, with great attention to look at our text, which will

inform us as to the law of the house. O that the Spirit may cause us to understand, and then lead us to obey.

Let us first try to *expound the law of the house*; secondly, let us *examine ourselves as to whether we have observed this law of the house*; thirdly, let us *see the bearings of this law*; and fourthly, let us *take orders for having this law of the house obeyed*.

I. First, LET US EXPOUND THE LAW OF THE HOUSE. Note the text carefully. It begins and ends with the same words: "*This is the law of the house*"; upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, *this is the law of the house*." These words make a frame for the statute; or a sort of hand on each side pointing to it. "This is the law of the house:" why are the words mentioned twice? Is it because we are such wayward scholars that we need to be told everything twice at the least? Is it because we are so blind and dull that unless we have a thing repeated we are not likely to notice it, or noticing it are sure to forget it? Or was this posted up because of the peculiar law as to going in and out of the temple? We read in the forty-sixth chapter, at the ninth verse, "But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord in the solemn feasts, he that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship shall go out by the way of the south gate; and he that entereth by the way of the south gate shall go forth by the way of the north gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it." When the worshipper entered he saw over the portal, "This is the law of the house"; and when he went out, if he looked back at the gate of his departure, he would see there too, "This is the law of the house." Or is it because this is the law of the house at the beginning of life, and this is the law of the house at the end of it? This is the law of the house for the young convert, and this is the law of the house for the most venerable saint? At any rate, the alpha and omega of Christian conduct is contained in the law of the house. You can go no higher than obedience to that law: indeed, you may say of it "It is high, I cannot attain unto it." Go as far as you may, this still remains to the most advanced among us the law of the house, for the Lord's commandment is exceedingly broad.

And what is this law of the house? Why, that everything about it is *holy*. All things in the church must be pure, clean, right, gracious, commendable, God-like. Everything that has to do with the church of God must be holy: here are the words, "Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit round about shall be most holy." Observe that all must be *holy*; nay, observe again, it must be *most holy*. In the old temple there was only one little chamber in the centre that was most holy; this was called the holy of holies, or the holiness of holiness: but now in the church of God every chamber, hall, and court is to be most holy. As was the veiled shrine into which none ever entered save the high priest, and he but once a year, and then not without blood:—as was that august apartment in which God shone forth from between the cherubim, such for holiness is the entire church to be in every member and every service.

Observe that this law of the house is not only intense, reaching to the superlative degree of holiness, but it is *most sweeping and*

encompassing: for we read, "Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy." The outer courts, the courts of the Gentiles, the walls, the promenades outside the walls, the slopes of the hill, every part that had to do with the mountain upon which the temple stood, was to be most holy. From which I gather that in the church of God it is not merely her ministers that are to be most holy, but her common members; not her sacraments only, but her ordinary meals: not her Sabbaths only, but her work-days; not her worship only, but her daily labour. All that which surrounds our consecrated life is to be consecrated too. The secular matters which touch our religion are to be made religious,—whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus. Not only are the bells on the high priest's garments to be "holiness unto the Lord," but the bells of the horses are to be the same. The pots and bowls of our kitchens are to be as truly sacred as the golden vessels with which the priests served the altar of the Most High. Holiness should be far reaching, and cover the whole ground of a Christian's life. He should be sanctified "spirit, soul, and body," and in all things he should bear evidence of having been set apart unto the Lord. Paul prayed that the very God of peace would sanctify us wholly. Amen; so let it be.

We notice, once again, that *this holiness was to be conspicuous*. The church is not as a house sequestered in a valley, or hidden away in a wood, but it is as the temple, which was set upon the top of a mountain, where it could be seen from afar. The whole of that mountain was holy. Conspicuous holiness ought to be the mark of the church of God. We should be a peculiar people, distinguished by this as a race dwelling alone, that cannot be numbered among the nations. We ought to be noted, not for talent, not for wealth, not for loud professions, but for holiness. Somehow or other true holiness is sure to be spied out and remarked upon. Like the violet, it tries to hide itself, but it is betrayed by its perfume. Like the star, it twinkles with modesty, but it is discovered by its light. Grace cannot be put under a bushel. It would fain be sheltered from its enemies by its obscurity, but the holy city evermore stands on a hill, and it cannot be hid. Would God that whenever people speak of the church to which we belong they may acknowledge its holiness! Would God that whenever they speak of you or me they may have no evil thing to say of us unless they lie. The world does not know how to name the thing which it both admires and hates, but it soon perceives its existence and owns its power,—the thing I mean is holiness, which is at once the glory and the strength of the people of God.

What is holiness? I know what it is, and yet I cannot in a few words define it. I will bring out its meaning by degrees, but I shall not do better than the poor Irish lad who had been converted to the faith. When he was asked by the missionary, "Patrick, what is holiness?" "Sir," said he, "it is having a clane inside." Just so. Morality is a clean outside, but holiness is being clean within. Morality is a dead body washed and laid in clean white linen: holiness is the living form in perfect purity. To be just to man is morality, to be hallowed unto God is holiness. The church of God must not be

reputedly good, but really pure; she must not have a name for virtue, but her heart must be right before God,—she must have a clean inside. Our lives must be such that observers may peep within doors and may see nothing for which to blame us. Our moral cleanliness must not be like that of a bad housewife, who sweeps the dirt under the mats, and puts away rags and rottenness in the corner cupboards. We must be so clear of the accursed thing that even if they dig in the earth they will not find an Achan's treasure hidden there. God desireth truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part he would make us to know wisdom.

We might instructively divide holiness into four things, and the first would be its negative side, *separation* from the world. There may be morality, but there can be no holiness in a worldling. The man who is as other men are, having experienced no change of nature and knowing no change of life, is not yet acquainted with Scriptural holiness. The word to every true saint is, "Come ye out from among them. Be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing." If we are conformed to the world we cannot be holy. Jesus said of all his saints, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are redeemed from among men that we may be like our Redeemer, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." We are not to be separate as to place, avoiding men with monkish fanaticism, for nobody mixed more with sinners than did our Lord. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" is the old reproach, but yet our Lord was not one of them, as everybody could see: nothing could be more clear than the difference between the lost sheep and the Shepherd who came among them seeking out his own. Every action, every word, every movement betokened that he was another man from the sinners whom he sought to bless. So must it be with us. As the lily among thorns so must we be among the mass of men. My fellow-professors, are you different from those among whom you dwell? Are you as different from them as a Jew is from a Gentile? Now, a Jew may do what he likes, he may live in the same style as an Englishman, a Pole, or a German, and he may in garb, in business, in speech be like the people among whom he dwells, but the image of father Jacob is upon him, and he cannot disguise the fact that he is an Israelite. If he is converted to Christianity, still he does not lose his nationality, you can still perceive that he is of the seed of Abraham. So ought it to be with the real Christian; wherever he is, and whatever he does, men ought to spy out that he is of the sect which is everywhere spoken against, and not an ordinary man. The title "the Peculiar People," belongs to all the followers of Jesus. They are strangers and sojourners, aliens and foreigners in this world, for they have come out at the divine call to be separated unto the Lord for ever. There is no holiness without separateness from the world.

Holiness next consists very largely in *consecration*. The holy things of the sanctuary were holy because they were dedicated to God. No one drank out of the sacred vessels except God's servants the priests; no victims were killed by the sacrificial knife, or laid upon the altar except such as were consecrated to Jehovah, for the altar was holy, and the fire thereof was holy. So must it be with us if we are to be holy: we must belong to Jehovah, we must be consecrated to him, and be used for his

own purposes. Not nominally only, but really, and as a matter of fact, we must live for God, and labour for God. That is our reason for existence, and if we answer not this end, we have no excuse for living, we are blots upon the face of nature, waste places, and barren trees which cumber the ground. Only so far as we are bringing glory to God are we answering the end and design of our creation. We are the Lord's priests, and if we do not serve him we are base pretenders. As Christians we are not our own, but bought with a price, and if we live as if we were our own we defraud our Redeemer. Will a man rob God? Will he rob Jesus of the purchase of his blood? Can we consent that the world, the flesh, the devil should use the vessels which are dedicated to God? Shall such sacrilege be tolerated? No, let us feel that we are the Lord's, and that his vows are upon us, binding us to lay ourselves out for him alone. This is an essential ingredient of holiness: the cleanest bowl in the sanctuary was not holy because it was clean; it became holy when, in addition to being cleansed, it was also hallowed unto the Lord. This is more than morality, decency, honesty, virtue. You tell me of your generosity, your goodness, and your pious intentions,—what of these? Are you consecrated, for if you are not consecrated to God you know nothing of holiness. This is the law of the house, that the church is consecrated to Christ, and that every man that comes into her midst must be the same. We must live for God and for his glorious kingdom, or we are not holy. Oh to make a dedication of ourselves to God without reserve, and then to stand to it for ever: this is the way of holiness.

But this does not complete the idea of holiness unless you add to it *conformity* to the will and character of God. If we are God's servants we must follow God's commands: we must be ready to do as our Master bids us because he is the Lord, and must be obeyed. We must make the Lord Jesus our example, and as Ezekiel says, "we must measure the pattern." It must be our meat and drink to do the will of him that sent us. Our rule is not our judgment, much less our fancy, but word of God is our statute book. We are to obey God that we may grow like God. The question to be asked is, What would the Lord have me do? or, What would Christ himself have done under the circumstances? Not, what is my wish, but what is God's law about this: not what will please me, but what will please him. Having been begotten again by God into the image of Christ, and so having become his true children we are to grow up into him in all things who is the head, being imitators of God as dear children, for so, and so only, shall we be holy. Do understand, then, that with regard to the whole range of the church, however wide her action, conformity to the character of God is the law of the house. Likeness to Christ must be seen in every single member, in every act of every member, and in the whole body, and in all its corporate acts. This is the law of the house.

I must add, however, to make up the idea of holiness, that there must be a close *communion* between the soul and God; for if a man could be, which is not possible, conformed to the likeness of God, and consecrated to God, yet if he never had any communication with God the idea of holiness would not be complete. The temple becomes holy because God dwells in it. He came into the most holy place in a most especial manner,

and this accounted for its being the holy of holies ; even so special communion with the Lord creates special holiness. God's presence demands and creates holiness. And so, brothers and sisters, if we would be holy we must dwell in God, and God must dwell in us. We cannot be holy at a distance from God. How is it with you ? How is it with this church ? Is God with us in all our services ? Is he recognised in all our efforts ? Does he reign in all our hearts ? Does Jesus abide with us, for this is according to the law of the house that God should be everywhere recognised, that we should in all things conform to his will, in all things be consecrated to his purposes, and for his sake in all things be separated from the rest of mankind. This is the law of the house.

II. Now, secondly, I want your help while I say **LET US EXAMINE OURSELVES BY THIS LAW.** Let each man question himself as to whether he has carefully observed the law of the house.

Brethren, the church of God is holy. It is founded by a holy God upon holy principles and for holy purposes. She has been redeemed by a holy Saviour, with a holy sacrifice, and dedicated to holy service. Her great glory is the Holy Spirit, whose influences and operations are all holy. Her law-book is the holy Bible, her armoury is the holy covenant, her comfort is holy prayer. Her convocations are holy assemblies ; her citizens are holy men and holy women ; she exists for holy ends, and follows after holy examples. Dear hearer, are you then as part of her "holiness to the Lord" ? Ask yourself questions, founded on what I have already said. Do I so live as to be *separated* ? Is there in my business a difference between me and those with whom I trade ? Are my thoughts different ? Does the current of my desire run in a different direction ? Am I at home with the ungodly, or does their sin vex me ? Am I one of them, or am I as a speckled bird among them ? Search, brethren, search and see whether ye be holy in that sense or no.

Next, let each one ask "Am I *consecrated* ? Am I living to God with my body, with my soul, with my spirit ? Am I using my substance, my talents, my time, my voice, my thoughts for God's glory ? What am I living for ? Am I making a pretence to live to God, and am I after all really living to self ? Am I like Ananias and Sapphira, pretending to give all, and yet keeping back a part of the price ?" The preacher would search his own heart, and he begs you all to search yours.

Next ask the question, am I living in *conformity* to the mind of the holy God ? Am I living as Christ would have lived in my place ? Do I as a master, as a servant, as a husband, as a wife, or as a child, act as God himself would have me act so that he could say to me, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." He is a jealous God : am I obeying him with care ? If I am not walking in obedience to God I am behaving disorderly, I am breaking the law of the house, and that house the house of the living God. Ought we not to take heed lest we insult the king in his own palace, and perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little.

Then, again, do I live in *communion* with God ? I cannot be holy and yet have a wall of division between me and God. Is there a great gulf of separation between me and the Lord ? then I am a stranger to holiness. I must have fellowship with him, or else I am living in a

manner which is sinful, dangerous, grievous, injurious. Brother, sister, let me put this pressing question,—Do you walk with God? Do you abide in fellowship with Jesus? I know there are some who would rather not give an answer to that question. I have met with believers who have said, "If you asked me whether I was drunken or dishonest, I should say 'No,' at once. If you asked me whether I have been up-right and moral, I could say 'Yes,' most certainly. But when you say, 'Are you walking in communion with the Lord? are you enjoying habitual fellowship with God?' I am not prepared to give you an answer, for I am weak upon this point." Are there not some professors among you who do not see the face of God by the month together, and seldom enjoy the presence of God at all? Their nearness to God is a thing of rare occasions, and not of everyday consciousness. At a meeting, when religious excitement stirs them, they are a little warmed up, but their general temperature suits the North Pole rather than the Equator. But, oh, dear friends, this will not do. We want you to dwell near to God always: to wake up in the morning with his light saluting the eyes of your soul; and to be with him while you are engaged in domestic concerns or out in the busy world. We want you often to have a secret word with the Well-beloved during the day, and to go to bed at night feeling how sweet it is to fall asleep upon the Saviour's bosom. Brother, how sweet to say, "When I awake I am still with thee." Jealous hearts count it a sorrow when even their dreams disorder their minds, and prevent their thinking of the Lord in their first conscious moment. I would to God we were so encompassed with divine love, so completely sanctified, so thoroughly holy, that we never lost for an instant a sense of the immediate presence of the Most High. I leave that work of self-examination with yourselves in the quiet hours of this afternoon. Do not neglect it, for as servants of the Lord it is incumbent upon you to remember that holiness becometh his house, and it will be ill for us to be walking contrary to his mind. "Measure the pattern," and measure yourselves by the law of the house.

III. Now, thirdly, WHAT ARE THE BEARINGS OF THIS LAW OF THE HOUSE? Those bearings of the law to which I now refer are these:—If the church of God shall be most holy, it will have as the result of it the greatest possible degree of the smile and favour of God. A holy church has God in the midst of her. The consequence of God's presence is a holy liveliness in all her members, for where God comes near to man lethargy and death soon fly away. Where the sacred presence abides sickness of soul disappears. Jehovah-Rophi heals his people among whom he dwells, and the inhabitant shall no more say, "I am sick." This again causes joy, and the bones which were broken rejoice.

Where there is holiness God comes, and there is sure to be love, for love is of the very essence of holiness. The fruit of the Spirit is love both to God and man. That love begets union of heart, brotherly kindness, sympathy, and affection, and these bring peace and happiness. Among the truly holy there are no divisions, no heresies, no separation into parties, but all are one in Christ. Whence come wars and fightings? Not from holiness, but from unconquered lusts. When we shall be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect we shall love as he

This, of course, leads to success in all the church's efforts, and a consequent increase. Her prayers are intense, and they bring down a blessing, for they are holy and acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ: her labours are abundant, and they secure an abundant harvest, for God will not forget her labour of love. The holy church with God in the midst of her is the place of brotherly unity, and consequently it is wet with the dew of Hermon, and there God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. Saints in such a state keep high holiday all the year round, having foretastes of heaven. Their trials are sanctified, and their mercies are multiplied; thus faith groweth exceedingly, and hope is confirmed. To their assemblies angels come trooping down, and up from them, by the way of the ladder which Jacob saw, they ascend to God. O happy people! Thrice happy in their Holy God!

A holy church, my brethren, may we see it! A church most holy in all her solemn services shall be "fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners." The nations among whom she dwells shall hear the fame thereof; they shall come from afar, and ask to see her prince, and they shall be astonished at his glory. The sons of the aliens shall come bending to her feet. Her converts shall be like flocks of doves, she shall herself wonder whence they came. There shall be no languor, no defeat, no disappointment, no doubt of eternal verities and no suspicions of infinite love. In the power of the Holy Spirit she shall be bravely confident, gloriously self-sacrificing, and so shall she go from victory to victory. Mount but this white horse of holiness, O ye armies of the Lord, and Christ shall lead the van, and all of you clothed in fine white linen shall follow him, and go forth conquering and to conquer.

On the other hand, imagine a church without holiness. What will come of it? Without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and if the church cannot even see her Lord, what is her condition? Go to Zion, and see what happens to God's house when once defiled. Mark how the holy and beautiful house was desolate and burnt with fire. Remember how God loathed Zion and bade her enemies cast her down stone from stone, and sow with salt the very site on which she stood. Was there ever destruction like to that which fell upon Jerusalem? Let us receive among our brotherhood unholy men and women, and let us tolerate and indulge them, and we shall soon see the anger of the Lord wax hot. Let us ourselves give way to laxity of principle and practice, let us lose our consecration and our communion, and what will soon be the effect? Probably first will come heartburning, envy, and strife; next, divisions, schisms, false doctrines, rivalries, contentions; or possibly the evil may take the form of lethargy, inactivity, worldliness, want of love to Christ and souls; by-and-by there will be diminished gatherings at the meetings for prayer, a cessation of all earnest pleading and consecrated living; then a falling-off of congregations; then a want of power in the ministry—a defect in the doctrine, perhaps, or else in the earnestness of the speaker; and all the while no conversions and no visits from the Lord. Shall it be, in years to come, that men will pass by the Tabernacle, and ask, "What is that huge house?" and the reply will be, it was built by an earnest, godly company in former years; but they are dead, and things are changed. What is it now?

There is a fine organ and a polished preacher, but the multitudes have departed, and the few who still keep together are of the cold, respectable order, who have no life or zeal. Then will this house be a proverb, a by-word and a hissing throughout the whole earth. How often am I jealous about this with a burning jealousy; my heart breaks when I hear of some of you that you live unholy lives. There are some, I fear, among you who so walk as to dishonour the cross of Christ; I mean not such as we can lay our finger on and say, "This man is a drunkard, or unchaste, or dishonest," else, as you well know, you would not long be spared,—no, not a moment longer than was needful for the proof of your wrong and of your impentence in it; but I mean such as cannot be thus dealt with, because their sins are not open,—the tares that grow up in the wheat, the actions not yet discovered,—because we cannot cast the lot so as to light upon this man or that, and say, "It is he." I tremble lest there should be among us some, utterly unknown to us, and undiscoverable by the most vigilant eye, whose sin, nevertheless, like a leprosy, should eat into the house, and make it unfit for the habitation of God. Oh, that we may never be so fallen that God himself shall say, "Let them alone." It was an awful moment when, in the holy place at Jerusalem, there was heard the moving of wings and a voice which said, "Let us go hence." Then the glory will have departed. Woe, woe, woe! Let the curtain drop with a shower of tears upon it. God grant it never may be so!

IV. So now, lastly, dear brethren, LET US TAKE ORDER TO SECURE OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF THE HOUSE. I believe that Jesus is always working in his own way for the purity of every true church. "His fan is in his hand"—see it moving continually—"and he will thoroughly purge his floor." God's melting fire is not in the world, where the dross contains no gold, but "his fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem." "The lord will judge his people." The Lord tries professors and their professions. I believe that there is a judgment going on over church members that some are little aware of. Paul speaks of a church in his day in this manner, he notes their inconsistencies, and adds, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." A special jurisdiction is over the palace of a king, a special rule pertains to a house which does not apply to people out of doors. Church members are under peculiar discipline, as it is written, "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Our Lord Jesus often makes the ministry to be as a great winnowing fan. Somebody is offended, and goes. What a mercy! You could not have compelled him to depart, but he removes of his own accord, and so the house is cleansed. The breath of the Spirit blows away much chaff. When our Lord preached his usual doctrine the chaff kept with the wheat, but when he came to speak of eating his flesh and drinking his blood the baser sort were offended, and "walked no more with him." Did he grieve over that separation between the precious and the vile? I trow not. He meant it should be so. A certain truth put in a certain way, with a personally pointed application, perhaps not intended by the preacher as to that particular individual, is nevertheless intended by God for that case, and the cutting word removes the rotten bough. Thus the purging work proceeds from day to day. We may expect our Master to

come among us every now and then with a scourge of small cords, and to smite right and left to purify the temple of God lest it should become a den of thieves. He is a jealous God, and he will not suffer defilement among his own people. Have you never seen great Christian communities at a certain phase of their existence come into troubled waters and break up like wrecks? There must have been a secret reason; probably the one assigned at the time was by no means the true one. Want of holiness led to want of love, and unloving spirits soon found a pretext for dispute. Those who should have met this with love, and quenched it by gentle wisdom, acted in a harsh spirit, being themselves deficient in grace, and so flint met steel, and sparks abounded; then came fire; then came general conflagration. The open mischief was an effect rather than a cause, and it may be hoped was even part of the cure. True, many a table of the money-changers was upset, and many a dove was seen to fly away in fright, but the scourge did not fail to make a clearance. How much better would it have been had there been no need for such a purging. If churches are not holy they cannot be prosperous, for God afflicts those who break the law of his house.

Now, cannot we give earnest heed that this law is regarded among us? "Yes," say you, "take care that you who are pastors, elders, and deacons are watchful and faithful. Guard well the door of the church, and see to it that you do not admit the ungodly: be vigilant also in discipline, so that when any are manifestly unholy they are put away." Brethren, this is our desire and labour; but after all, what can we do? With all our diligence what can a small band of officers accomplish in a great church which is numbered by thousands? Brothers and sisters, this must be taken up by you all. Let every man bear his own burden. I would have every man sweep in the front of his own door. I pray that each person who belongs to this church may be jealous for its purity, and watch both over himself and his brethren, lest any form of sin should be a root of bitterness to trouble us, and thereby many should be defiled.

Let us set to this work at once. Here is the first exercise for us: let us *repent of past failures* in holiness. We shall never overcome sin till we are conscious of it and ashamed of it. Hence the Lord said to the prophet, "Thou son of man, show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof." The first step towards purity is penitence. Let us bow our heads and lament before the Lord the sins of our holy things, our personal trespasses, our transgressions against love, our offences against the law of the house. He that is least ashamed will probably be the person who has most cause to blush, and he who will be most humbled will be the man who has least transgressed. In any case we have sinned as a church, and come short of the glory of God, and an honest confession is due from us.

Having owned our error, let us next *make the law of God's house our earnest study* that we may avoid offences in the future. You will hardly keep the law if you do not know it. Search the sacred word day and night. Let the inspired page be your standard. Never mind what your minister tells you, observe what the Spirit of God tells you. Get to your

Bibles, search them, and there see how you ought to behave in the house of God. Be much upon your knees asking the Lord to teach you his mind and will, and specially beseech him to write his law upon your hearts, for you will never keep it in your life till it is written there.

When you have studied the law of the house, then next *be intensely real in your endeavour to observe it*. How much of the religion of the present day is a sham. Men talk of being holy, do they know what they mean? We speak of consecration, and yet live as if we were mere worldings hunting for wealth, or fame, or pleasure. Some sing of giving all to God, and yet their contributions are miserably small. Some say they are living wholly for God, but if they had lived wholly for themselves it would not have made any particular difference in what they have done. Oh, let us be real. Do not let us preach what we do not believe, nor profess to be believers in a creed which is not true to our own souls. Get a grip of eternal things; hold them, feel their solemn weight, and live under their influence. That which is unreal is unholy. The bloated Pharisee is unholy; the empty formalist is unholy; but the sincere penitent, the truly honest seeker after holiness is already holy in some degree. Thine eyes, O Lord, are upon truth.

Then *let us cry for a sincere and growing faith* in God concerning this matter of holiness. Let us believe in Jesus, that by his Holy Spirit he can make us holy. Do not let us believe that any sin is inevitable, rather let us feel bound to overcome it. Let us not trust in our own strugglings and strivings, but let us as much trust Christ to work in us sanctification as to work for us justification. Let faith deal with the water as well as with the blood, for they both flowed from the same fountain in the Saviour's riven side.

And then, lastly, let us *pray to be set on fire with an intense zeal for God*. I do not believe that there is such a thing as cold holiness in the world. As soon as a bullock was dedicated to God, and brought to the altar, it had to be burned with fire, and so must every consecrated life. You and I are never the Lord's while we are cold-hearted. We must be on fire if we are to be sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Get rid of zeal from the church, and you have removed one of the most purifying elements, for God intends to purge Jerusalem by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. Oh, to be baptized into the Holy Ghost and into fire. Refining fire go through and through our souls till all that defileth shall be utterly consumed, and we shall be as ingots of pure gold, wholly the Lord's.

Thus have we rehearsed in your ears the law of the house. May the Holy Spirit enable you to keep it unto the end.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Galatians v. 13—26;
vi. 1—10.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—162, 653, 879.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PENTECOSTAL WIND AND FIRE.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”—Acts ii. 2—4.

FROM the descent of the Holy Ghost at the beginning we may learn something concerning his operations at the present time. Remember at the outset that whatever the Holy Spirit was at the first that he is now, for as God he remaineth for ever the same: whatsoever he then did he is able to do still, for his power is by no means diminished. As saith the prophet Micah, “O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened?” We should greatly grieve the Holy Spirit if we supposed that his might was less to-day than in the beginning. Although we may not expect, and need not desire, the miracles which came with the gift of the Holy Spirit, so far as they were physical, yet we may both desire and expect that which was intended and symbolized by them, and we may reckon to see the like spiritual wonders performed among us at this day.

Pentecost, according to the belief of the Jews, was the time of the giving of the law; and if when the law was given there was a marvellous display of power on Sinai, it was to be expected that when the gospel was given, whose ministration is far more glorious, there should be some special unveiling of the divine presence. If at the commencement of the gospel we beheld the Holy Spirit working great signs and wonders may we not expect a continuance—nay, if anything, an increased display—of his power as the ages roll on? The law vanished away, but the gospel will never vanish; it shineth more and more to the perfect millennial day; therefore, I reckon that, with the sole exception of physical miracles, whatever was wrought by the Holy Ghost at the first we may look to be wrought continually while the dispensation lasts. It ought not to be forgotten that Pentecost was the feast of first fruits; it was the time when the first ears of ripe corn were offered unto God. If, then, at the commencement of the gospel harvest we see so plainly

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the power of the Holy Spirit, may we not most properly expect infinitely more as the harvest advances, and most of all when the most numerous sheaves shall be ingathered? May we not conclude that if the Pentecost was thus marvellous the actual harvest will be more wonderful still?

This morning my object is not to talk of the descent of the Holy Spirit as a piece of history, but to view it as a fact bearing upon us at this hour, even upon us who are called in these latter days to bear our testimony for the truth. The Father hath sent us the Comforter that he may dwell in us till the coming of the Lord. The Holy Ghost has never returned, for he came in accordance with the Saviour's prayer, to abide with us for ever. The gift of the Comforter was not temporary, and the display of his power was not to be once seen and no more. The Holy Ghost is here, and we ought to expect his divine working among us: and if he does not so work we should search ourselves to see what it is that hindereth, and whether there may not be somewhat in ourselves which vexes him, so that he restrains his sacred energy, and doth not work among us as he did aforesaid. May God grant that the meditation of this morning may increase our faith in the Holy Ghost, and inflame our desires towards him, so that we may look to see him fulfilling his mission among men as at the beginning.

I. First, I shall call your attention to THE INSTRUCTIVE SYMBOLS of the Holy Spirit, which were made prominent at Pentecost. They were two. There was a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and there were cloven tongues as it were of fire.

Take the symbols separately. The first is *wind*—an emblem of Deity, and therefore a proper symbol of the Holy Spirit. Often under the Old Testament God revealed himself under the emblem of breath or wind: indeed, as most of you know, the Hebrew word for "wind" and "spirit" is the same. So, with the Greek word, when Christ talked to Nicodemus, it is not very easy for translators to tell us when he said "spirit" and when he said "wind;" indeed, some most correctly render the original all the way through by the word "wind," while others with much reason have also used the word "spirit" in their translation. The original word signified either the one or the other, or both. Wind is, of all material things, one of the most spiritual in appearance; it is invisible, ethereal, mysterious; hence, men have fixed upon it as being nearest akin to spirit. In Ezekiel's famous vision, when he saw the valley full of dry bones, we all know that the Spirit of God was intended by that vivifying wind which came when the prophet prophesied and blew upon the withered relics till they were quickened into life. "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind," thus he displays himself when he works: "The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind," thus he reveals himself when he teaches his servants.

Observe that this wind was on the day of Pentecost accompanied with a sound—a sound as of a rushing mighty wind; for albeit the Spirit of God can work in silence, yet in saving operations he frequently uses sound. I would be the last to depreciate meetings in which there is nothing but holy silence, for I could wish that we had more reverence for silence, and it is in stillness that the inner life is nourished; yet the Holy Ghost does not work for the advancement of the kingdom of

God by silence alone, for faith cometh by hearing. There is a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind, when the word is sounded forth throughout whole nations by the publishing of the gospel. If the Lord had not given men ears or tongues silent worship would have been not only appropriate but necessary; but inasmuch as we have ears the Lord must have intended us to hear something, and as we have tongues he must have meant us to speak. Some of us would be glad to be quiet, but where the gospel has free course, there is sure to be a measure of noise and stir. The sound came on this occasion, no doubt, to call the attention of the assembly to what was about to occur, to arouse them, and to fill them with awe! There is something indescribably solemn about the rush of a rising tempest; it bows the soul before the sublime mystery of divine power. What more fitting as an attendant upon divine working than the deeply solemn rush of a mighty wind.

With this awe-inspiring sound as of a mighty wind, there was clear indication of its coming from heaven. Ordinary winds blow from this or that quarter of the skies, but this descended from heaven itself: it was distinctly like a down-draught from above. This sets forth the fact that the true Spirit, the Spirit of God, neither comes from this place nor that, neither can his power be controlled or directed by human authority, but his working is ever from above, from God himself. The work of the Holy Spirit is, so to speak, the breath of God, and his power is evermore in a special sense the immediate power of God. Coming downward, therefore, this mysterious wind passed into the chamber where the disciples were assembled, and filled the room. An ordinary rushing mighty wind would have been felt outside the room, and would probably have destroyed the house or injured the inmates, if it had been aimed at any one building; but this heavenly gust filled but did not destroy the room, it blessed but did not overthrow the waiting company.

The meaning of the symbol is that as breath, air, wind, is the very life of man, so is the Spirit of God the life of the spiritual man. By him are we quickened at the first; by him are we kept alive afterwards; by him is the inner life nurtured, and increased, and perfected. The breath of the nostrils of the man of God is the Spirit of God.

This holy breath was not only intended to quicken them, but to invigorate them. What a blessing would a breeze be just now to us who sit in this heavy atmosphere! How gladly would we hail a gust from the breezy down, or a gale from the open sea! If the winds of earth are so refreshing what must a wind from heaven be! That rushing mighty wind soon cleared away all earth-engendered damps and vapours; it aroused the disciples and left them braced up for the further work of the Lord. They took in great draughts of heavenly life; they felt animated, aroused, and bestirred. A sacred enthusiasm came upon them, because they were filled with the Holy Ghost; and, girt with that strength, they rose into a nobler form of life than they had known before.

No doubt this wind was intended to show the irresistible power of the Holy Ghost; for simple as the air is, and mobile and apparently feeble, yet set it in motion, and you feel that a thing of life is among you; make that motion more rapid, and who knows the power of the restless giant who has been awakened. See, it becomes a storm, a

tempest, a hurricane, a tornado, a cyclone. Nothing can be more potent than the wind when it is thoroughly roused, and so, though the Spirit of God be despised among men, so much so that they do not even believe in his existence, yet let him work with the fulness of his power, and you will see what he can do. He comes softly, breathing like a gentle zephyr, which fans the flowers, but does not dislodge the insect of most gauzy wing, and our hearts are comforted. He comes like a stirring breeze, and we are quickened to a livelier diligence: our sails are hoisted and we fly before the gale. He comes with yet greater strength, and we prostrate ourselves in the dust as we hear the thunder of his power, bringing down with a crash false confidences and refuges of lies! How the firm reliances of carnal men, which seemed to stand like rocks, are utterly cast down! How men's hopes, which appeared to be rooted like oaks, are torn up by the roots before the breath of the convincing Spirit! What can stand against him? Oh! that we did but see in these latter days something of that mighty rushing wind which breaketh the cedars of Lebanon, and sweeps before it all things that would resist its power.

The second Pentecostal symbol was *fire*. Fire, again, is a frequent symbol of Deity. Abraham saw a burning lamp, and Moses beheld a burning bush. When Solomon had builded his holy and beautiful house, its consecration lay in the fire of God descending upon the sacrifice to mark that the Lord was there; for when the Lord had dwelt aforetime in the tabernacle, which was superseded by the temple, he revealed himself in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. "Our God is a consuming fire." Hence the symbol of fire is a fit emblem of God the Holy Spirit. Let us adore and worship him. Tongues of flame sitting on each man's head betoken a personal visitation to the mind and heart of each one of the chosen company. Not to consume them came the fires, for no one was injured by the flaming tongue; to men whom the Lord has prepared for his approach there is no danger in his visitations. They see God, and their lives are preserved; they feel his fires, and are not consumed. This is the privilege of those alone who have been prepared and purified for such fellowship with God.

The intention of the symbol was to show them that the Holy Spirit would illuminate them, as fire gives light. "He shall lead you into all truth." Henceforth they were to be no more children untrained, but to be teachers in Israel, instructors of the nations whom they were to disciple unto Christ: hence the Spirit of light was upon them. But fire doth more than give light: it inflames; and the flames which sat upon each showed them that they were to be ablaze with love, intense with zeal, burning with self-sacrifice; and that they were to go forth among men to speak not with the chill tongue of deliberate logic, but with burning tongues of passionate pleading; persuading and entreating men to come unto Christ that they might live. The fire signified inspiration. God was about to make them speak under a divine influence, to speak as the Spirit of God should give them utterance. Oh! blessed symbol, would God that all of us experienced its meaning to the full, and that the tongue of fire did sit upon every servant of the Lord. A fire burn steadily within to destroy our sin, a holy sacrificial

flame to make us whole burnt offerings unto God, a never-dying flame of zeal for God, and devotion to the cross.

Note that the emblem was not only fire, but a tongue of fire; for God meant to have a speaking church: not a church that would fight with the sword—with that weapon we have nought to do—but a church that should have a sword proceeding out of its mouth, whose one weapon should be the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I should think from what I know of some preachers that when they had their Pentecost the influence sat upon them in the form of tongues of flowers; but the apostolic Pentecost knew not flowers, but flames. What fine preaching we have nowadays! What new thoughts, and poetical turns! This is not the style of the Holy Ghost. Soft and gentle is the flow of smooth speech which tells of the dignity of man, the grandeur of the century, the toning down of all punishment for sin, and the probable restoration of all lost spirits, including the arch-fiend himself. This is the Satanic ministry, subtle as the serpent, bland as his seducing words to Eve. The Holy Ghost calls us not to this mode of speech. Fire, intensity, zeal, passion as much as you will, but as for aiming at effect by polished phrases and brilliant periods—these are fitter for those who would deceive men than for those who would tell them the message of the Most High. The style of the Holy Ghost is one which conveys the truth to the mind in the most forcible manner,—it is plain but flaming, simple but consuming. The Holy Spirit has never written a cold period throughout the whole Bible, and never did he speak by a man a lifeless word, but evermore he gives and blesses the tongue of fire.

These, then, are the two symbols; and I should like you carefully to observe how the Holy Spirit teaches us by them. When he came from the Father to his Son Jesus it was as a dove. Let peace rest on that dear sufferer's soul through all his days of labour and through the passion which would close them. His anointing is that of peace: he needed no tongue of flame, for he was already all on fire with love. When the Holy Spirit was bestowed by the Son of God upon his disciples it was as breath—"He breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Ghost." To have life more abundantly is a chief necessity of servants of the Lord Jesus, and therefore thus the Holy Ghost visits us. Now that we have the Holy Spirit from Christ as our inner life and quickening he also comes upon us with the intent to use us in blessing others, and this is the manner of his visitation,—he comes as the wind, which wafts the words we speak, and as fire which burns a way for the truth we utter. Our words are now full of life and flame; they are borne by the breath of the Spirit, and they fall like fire-flakes, and set the souls of men blazing with desire after God. If the Holy Spirit shall rest upon me or upon you, or upon any of us, to qualify us for service, it shall be after this fashion—not merely of life for ourselves, but of fiery energy in dealing with others. Come on us even now, O rushing mighty wind and tongue of fire, for the world hath great need. It lies stagnant in the malaria of sin and needs a healing wind; it is shrouded in dreadful night, and needs the flaming torch of truth. There is neither health nor light for it but from thee, O blessed Spirit; come, then, upon it through thy people.

Now put these two symbols together; only mind what you are at.

Wind and fire together! I have kept them separate in my discourse hitherto; and you have seen power in each one; what are they together? Rushing mighty wind alone how terrible! Who shall stand against it? See how the gallant ships dash together, and the monarchs of the forest bow their heads. And fire alone! Who shall stand against it when it devours its prey? But set wind and fire to work in hearty union! Remember the old city of London. When first the flames began it was utterly impossible to quench them because the wind fanned the flame, and the buildings gave way before the fire-torrent. Set the prairie on fire. If a rain-shower falls, and the air is still, the grass may perhaps cease to burn, but let the wind encourage the flame, and see how the devourer sweeps along while the tall grass is licked up by tongues of fire. We have lately read of forests on fire. What a sight! Hear how the mighty trees are crashing in the flame! What can stand against it! The fire setteth the mountains on a blaze. What a smoke blackens the skies; it grows dark at noon. As hill after hill offers up its sacrifice the timid imagine that the great day of the Lord has come. If we could see a spiritual conflagration of equal grandeur it were a consummation devoutly to be wished. O God, send us the Holy Ghost in this fashion: give us both the breath of spiritual life and the fire of unconquerable zeal, till nation after nation shall yield to the sway of Jesus. O thou who art our God, answer us by fire, we pray thee. Answer us both by wind and fire, and then shall we see thee to be God indeed. The kingdom comes not, and the work is flagging. O that thou wouldest send the wind and the fire! Thou wilt do this when we are all of one accord, all believing, all expecting, all prepared by prayer. Lord, bring us to this waiting state.

II. Secondly, my brethren, follow me while I call your attention to THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS of this descent of the Holy Spirit, for these symbols were not sent in vain. There were two immediate effects: the first was *filling*, and the second was *the gift of utterance*. I call special attention to the first, namely, filling: "It filled all the house where they were sitting": and it did not merely fill the house, but the men—"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." When they stood up to speak even the ribald mockers in the crowd noticed this, for they said, "These men are full," and though they added "with new wine," yet they evidently detected a singular fulness about them. We are poor, empty things by nature, and useless while we remain so: we need to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Some people seem to believe in the Spirit of God giving utterance only, and they look upon instruction in divine things as of secondary importance. Dear, dear me, what trouble comes when we act upon that theory! How the empty vessels clatter, and rattle, and sound! Men in such case utter a wonderful amount of nothing, and even when that nothing is set on fire it does not come to much. I dread a revival of that sort, where the first thing and the last thing is everlasting talk. Those who set up for teachers ought to be themselves taught of the Lord; how can they communicate that which they have not received? Where the Spirit of God is truly at work he first fills and then gives utterance: that is his way. Oh that you and I were at this moment filled with the Holy Ghost. "Full!" Then they were not cold, and dead, and empty of life as we sometimes

are. "Full." Then there was no room for anything else in any one of them! They were too completely occupied by the heavenly power to have room for the desires of the flesh. Fear was banished, every minor motive was expelled: the Spirit of God as it flooded their very being drove out of them everything that was extraneous. They had many faults and many infirmities before, but that day, when they were filled with the Spirit of God, faults and infirmities were no more perceptible. They became different men from what they had ever been before: men full of God are the reverse of men full of self. The difference between an empty man and a full man is something very wonderful. Let a thirsty person have an empty vessel handed to him. There may be much noise in the handing, but what a mockery it is as it touches his lips; but fill it with refreshing water, and perhaps there may be all the more silence in the passing it, for a full cup needs careful handling; but oh, what a blessing when it reaches the man's lips! Out of a full vessel he may drink his full. Out of a full church the world shall receive salvation, but never out of an empty one. The first thing we want as a church is to be filled with the Holy Ghost: the gift of utterance will then come as a matter of course. They ask me, "May the sisters speak anywhere? If not in the assembly, may they not speak in smaller meetings?" I answer, yes, if they are full of the Holy Ghost. Shall this brother or that be allowed to speak? Certainly, if he be filled, he may flow. May a layman preach? I know nothing about laymen except that I am no cleric myself; but let all speak who are full of the Holy Ghost. "Spring up, O well." If it be a fountain of living water who would restrain it, who could restrain it? Let him overflow who is full, but mind he does not set up to pour out when there is nothing in him; for if he counts it his official duty to go pouring out, pouring out, pouring out, at unreasonable length, and yet nothing comes of it, I am sure he acts, not by the Holy Spirit, but according to his own vanity.

The next Pentecostal symbol was *utterance*. As soon as the Spirit of God filled them they began to speak at once. It seems to me that they began to speak before the people had come together. They could not help it; the inner forces demanded expression, and they must speak. So when the Spirit of God really comes upon a man, he does not wait till he has gathered an audience of the size which he desires, but he seizes the next opportunity. He speaks to one person, he speaks to two, he speaks to three, to anybody: he must speak, for he is full, and must have vent.

When the Spirit of God fills a man he speaks so as to be understood. The crowd spake different languages, and these Spirit-taught men spoke to them in the language of the country in which they were born. This is one of the signs of the Spirit's utterance. If my friend over yonder talks in a Latinized style to a company of costermongers, I will warrant you the Holy Ghost has nothing to do with him. If a learned brother fires over the heads of his congregation with a grand oration, he may trace his elocution, if he likes, to Cicero and Demosthenes, but do not let him ascribe it to the Holy Spirit, for that is not after his manner. The Spirit of God speaks so that his words may be understood, and if there be any obscurity it lies in the language used by the Lord himself.

The crowd not only understood, but they felt. There were lancets in this Pentecostal preaching, and the hearers "were pricked in the heart." The truth wounded men, and the slain of the Lord were many, for the wounds were in the most vital part. They could not make it out: they had heard speakers before, but this was quite a different thing. The men spake fire-flakes, and one hearer cried to his fellow, "What is this?" The preachers were speaking flame, and the fire dropped into the hearts of men till they were amazed and confounded.

Those are the two effects of the Holy Spirit,—a fulness of the Spirit in the ministry and the church, and next, a fire ministry, and a church on fire, speaking so as to be felt and understood by those around. Causes produce effects like themselves, and this wind and fire ministry soon did its work. We read that this "was noised abroad." Of course it was, because there had been a noise as of a rushing mighty wind. Next to that we read that all the people came together, and were confounded. There was naturally a stir, for a great wind from heaven was rushing. All were amazed and astonished, and while some enquired believingly, others began to mock. Of course they did: there was a fire burning, and fire is a dividing thing, and this fire began to separate between the precious and the vile, as it always will do when it comes into operation. We may expect at the beginning of a true revival to observe a movement among the people, a noise, and a stir. These things are not done in a corner. Cities will know of the presence of God, and crowds will be attracted by the event.

This was the immediate effect of the Pentecostal marvel, and I shall now ask you to follow me to my third point, which is this:—

III. The Holy Spirit being thus at work, what was THE MOST PROMINENT SUBJECT which these full men began to preach about with words of fire? Suppose that the Holy Spirit should work mightily in the church, what would our ministers preach about? We should have a revival, should we not, of the old discussions about predestination and free agency? I do not think so: these are happily ended, for they tended towards bitterness, and for the most part the disputants were not equal to their task. We should hear a great deal about the pre-millennial and the post-millennial advent, should we not? I do not think so. I never saw much of the Spirit of God in discussions or dreamings upon times and seasons which are not clearly revealed. Should we not hear learned essays upon advanced theology? No, sir; when the devil inspires the church we have modern theology; but when the Spirit of God is among us that rubbish is shot out with loathing. What did these men preach about? Their hearers said, "We do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." Their subject was the wonderful works of God. Oh, that this might be to my dying day my sole and only topic,—*"The wonderful works of God."* For, first, they spoke of *redemption*, that wonderful work of God. Peter's sermon was a specimen of how they spoke of it. He told the people that Jesus was the Son of God, that they had crucified and slain him, but that he had come to redeem men, and that there was salvation through his precious blood. He preached redemption. Oh, how this land will echo again and again with "*Redemption, redemption, redemption, redemption by the precious blood,*" when the Holy Ghost is with us. This is fit fuel for the tongue

of flame : this is something worthy to be wafted by the divine wind. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This is one of the wonderful works of God of which we can never make too frequent mention.

They certainly spoke of the next wonderful work of God, namely, *regeneration*. There was no concealing of the work of the Holy Spirit in that primitive ministry. It was brought to the front. Peter said, "Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." The preachers of Pentecost told of the Spirit's work by the Spirit's power : conversion, repentance, renewal, faith, holiness, and such things were freely spoken of and ascribed to their real author, the divine Spirit. If the Spirit of God shall give us once again a full and fiery ministry we shall hear it clearly proclaimed, "Ye must be born again," and we shall see a people forthcoming which are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of the will of God, and by the energy which cometh from heaven. A Holy Ghost ministry cannot be silent about the Holy Ghost and his sacred operations upon the heart.

And very plainly they spoke on a third wonderful work of God, namely, *remission* of sin. This was the point that Peter pushed home to them, that on repentance they should receive remission of sins. What a blessed message is this ;—Pardon for crimes of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' blood, free pardon, full pardon, irreversible pardon given to the vilest of the vile when they ground their weapons of rebellion, and bow at the feet that once were nailed to the tree. If we would prove ourselves to be under divine influence, we must keep to the divine message of fatherly forgiveness to returning prodigals. What happier word can we deliver ?

These are the doctrines which the Holy Ghost will revive in the midst of the land when he worketh mightily—redemption, regeneration, remission. If you would have the Spirit of God resting on your labours, dear brothers and sisters, keep these three things ever to the front, and make all men hear in their own tongue the wonderful works of God.

IV. I shall close by noticing, in the fourth place, what were the **GLORIOUS RESULTS** of all this. Have patience with me, if you find the details somewhat long. The result of the Spirit coming as wind and fire, filling and giving utterance, was, first, in the hearers' *deep feeling*. There was never, perhaps, in the world such a feeling excited by the language of mortal man as that which was aroused in the crowds in Jerusalem on that day. You might have seen a group here, and a group there, all listening to the same story of the wondrous works of God, and all stirred and affected ; for the heavenly wind and fire went with the preaching, and they could not help feeling its power. We are told that they were pricked in the heart. They had painful emotions, they felt wounds which killed their enmity. The word struck at the centre of their being : it pierced the vital point. Alas, people come into our places of worship nowadays to hear the preacher, and their friends ask them on their return, "How did you like him ?" Was that your errand, to see how you liked him ? What practical benefit is there in such a mode of using the servants of God ? Are we sent among you to give opportunities for criticism ? Yet the mass of men seem to think that

we are nothing better than fiddlers or play-actors, who come upon the stage to help you while away an hour. O my hearers, if we are true to our God, and true to you, ours is a more solemn business than most men dream. The object of all true preaching is the heart: we aim at divorcing the heart from sin, and wedding it to Christ. Our ministry has failed, and has not the divine seal set upon it, unless it makes men tremble, makes them sad, and then anon brings them to Christ, and causes them to rejoice. Sermons are to be heard in thousands, and yet how little comes of them all, because the heart is not aimed at, or else the archers miss the mark. Alas, our hearers do not present their hearts as our target, but leave them at home, and bring us only their ears, or their heads. Here we need the divine aid. Pray mightily that the Spirit of God may rest upon all who speak in God's name, for then they will create deep feeling in their hearers!

Then followed an *earnest enquiry*. "They were pricked in their heart, and they said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Emotion is of itself but a poor result unless it leads to practical action. To make men feel is well enough, but it must be a feeling which impels them to immediate movement, or at least to earnest enquiry as to what they shall do. O Spirit of God, if thou wilt rest on me, even me, men shall not hear and go their way and forget what they have heard! They will arise and seek the Father, and taste his love. If thou wouldst rest on all the brotherhood that publish thy word men would not merely weep while they hear, and be affected while the discourse lasts, but they would go their way to ask, "What must we do to be saved?" This is what we need. We do not require new preachers, but we need a new anointing of the Spirit. We do not require novel forms of service, but we want the fire Spirit, the wind Spirit to work by us till everywhere men cry, "What must we do to be saved?"

Then came a *grand reception of the word*. We are told that they gladly received the word, and they received it in two senses: first, Peter bade them repent, and so they did. They were pricked to the heart from compunction on account of what they had done to Jesus, and they sorrowed after a godly sort, and quitted their sins. They also believed in him whom they had slain, and accepted him as their Saviour there and then, without longer hesitancy. They trusted in him whom God had set forth to be a propitiation, and thus they fully received the word. Repentance and faith make up a complete reception of Christ, and they had both of these. Why should we not see this divine result to-day? We shall see it in proportion to our faith.

But what next? Why, they were *baptized* directly. Having repented and believed, the next step was to make confession of their faith; and they did not postpone that act for a single day; why should they? Willing hands were there, the whole company of the faithful were all glad to engage in the holy service, and that same day were they baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Ghost were fully with us, we should never have to complain that many believers never confess their faith, for they would be eager to confess the Saviour's name in his own appointed way. Backwardness to be baptized comes too often of fear of persecution, in-
wardness, love of ease, pride, or disobedience; but all these vanish when

the heavenly wind and fire are doing their sacred work. Sinful diffidence soon disappears, sinful shame of Jesus is no more seen, and hesitancy and delay are banished for ever when the Holy Spirit works with power.

Furthermore, there was not merely this immediate confession, but as a result of the Spirit of God there was *great steadfastness*. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." We have had plenty of revivals of the human sort, and their results have been sadly disappointing. Under excitement nominal converts have been multiplied: but where are they after a little testing? I am sadly compelled to own that, so far as I can observe, there has been much sown, and very little reaped that was worth reaping, from much of that which has been called revival. Our hopes were flattering as a dream; but the apparent result has vanished like a vision of the night. But where the Spirit of God is really at work the converts stand: they are well rooted and grounded, and hence they are not carried about by every wind of doctrine, but they continue steadfast in the apostolic truth.

We see next that there was *abundant worship of God*, for they were steadfast not only in the doctrine, but in breaking of bread, and in prayer, and in fellowship. There was no difficulty in getting a prayer meeting then, no difficulty in maintaining daily communion then, no want of holy fellowship then; for the Spirit of God was among them, and the ordinances were precious in their eyes. "Oh," say some, "if we could get this minister or that evangelist we should do well." Brothers, if you had the Holy Spirit you would have everything else growing out of his presence, for all good things are summed up in him.

Next to this there came *striking generosity*. Funds were not hard to raise: liberality overflowed its banks, for believers poured all that they had into the common fund. Then was it indeed seen to be true that the silver and the gold are the Lord's. When the Spirit of God operates powerfully there is little need to issue telling appeals for widows and orphans, or to go down on your knees and plead for missionary fields which cannot be occupied for want of money. At this moment our village churches can scarcely support their pastors at a starvation rate; but I believe that if the Spirit of God will visit all the churches, means will be forthcoming to keep all going right vigorously. If this does not happen, I tremble for our Nonconformist churches, for the means of their existence will be absent; both as to spiritual and temporal supplies they will utterly fail. There will be no lack of money when there is no lack of grace. When the Spirit of God comes, those who have substance yield it to their Lord: those who have but little grow rich by giving of that little, and those who are already rich become happy by consecrating what they have. There is no need to rattle the box when the rushing mighty wind is heard, and the fire is dissolving all hearts in love.

Then came *continual gladness*. "They did eat their meat with gladness." They were not merely glad at prayer-meetings and sermons, but glad at breakfast and at supper. Whatever they had to eat they were for singing over it. Jerusalem was the happiest city that ever was when the Spirit of God was there. The disciples were singing from morning to night, and I have no doubt the outsiders asked, "What is

it all about?" The temple was never so frequented as then; there was never such singing before; the very streets of Jerusalem, and the Hill of Zion, rang with the songs of the once despised Galileans.

They were full of gladness, and that gladness showed itself in *praising God*. I have no doubt they broke out now and then in the services with shouts of, "Glory! Hallelujah!" I should not wonder but what all propriety was scattered to the winds. They were so glad, so exhilarated that they were ready to leap for joy. Of course we never say "Amen," or "Glory!" now. We have grown to be so frozenly proper that we never interrupt a service in any way, because, to tell the truth, we are not so particularly glad, we are not so specially full of praise that we want to do anything of the sort. Alas, we have lost very much of the Spirit of God, and much of the joy and gladness which attend his presence, and so we have settled into a decorous apathy! We gather the pinks of propriety instead of the palm branches of praise. God send us a season of glorious disorder. Oh for a sweep of wind that will set the seas in motion, and make our ironclad brethren now lying so quietly at anchor to roll from stem to stern. As for us, who are as the little ships, we will fly before the gale if it will but speed us to our desired haven. Oh for fire to fall again,—fire which shall affect the most stolid! This is a sure remedy for indifference. When a flake of fire falls into a man's bosom he knows it, and when the word of God comes home to a man's soul he knows it too. Oh that such fire might first sit upon the disciples, and then fall on all around!

For, to close, there was then a *daily increase* of the church—"The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Conversion was going on perpetually; additions to the church were not events which happened once a year, but they were everyday matters, "so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." O Spirit of God, thou art ready to work with us to-day even as thou didst then! Stay not, we beseech thee, but work at once. Break down every barrier that hinders the incomings of thy might. Overturn, overturn, O sacred wind! Consume all obstacles, O heavenly fire, and give us now both hearts of flame and tongues of fire to preach thy reconciling word, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—317, 419, 451.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU?

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 11TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

On a night when the Tabernacle was thrown open to all comers, the ordinary hearers vacating their seats for the occasion.

"Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."—Lamentations i. 12.

SYMPATHY with suffering ones is never content to act her part alone. The man who is sorrowful for another is sure to invite others to join him in his sympathy. It seems to him so sad a thing that he would have all men weep over it with himself. It is so great a grief that he would hang the heavens with blackness and drape the world in sack-cloth. Hence Jeremiah, when he saw the sorrows of Jerusalem, complained of all who dared to pass her by without a lamentation. He beheld that ancient and glorious city besieged by her adversaries, invaded by their fierce armies, and given over to plunder, to murder, to fire and desolation. He beheld the streets running with the blood of her sons and daughters, her houses broken down, and her glorious temple defiled and laid in ashes. Do you wonder that he wept, and called upon others to weep with him? He pictured Jerusalem as sitting by the wayside like a maiden who has been sore wounded and is in bitter grief, and crying out in her loveliness and anguish, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

In all the annals of history there never was sorrow equal to the fate of Jerusalem. Many cities have been destroyed, but none have fallen amid such a tempest of terrors. They have been devoured with famine, wasted with pestilence, or broken down by war; but as for thee, O Jerusalem, all these evils met upon thee, as when the vultures hasten from afar, and meet upon the slain. Beautiful for situation, yet terrible for desolation! Joy of the whole earth, and yet the queen of sorrow! How utterly wast thou spoiled! Had the grape-gatherers gathered the grapes they would have left here and there a cluster, but thou art thoroughly stripped; no fruit remaineth in thee; thy desolation is complete! How terrible was thy lot, and how grievous was thy fault!

Well did the prophet in the foresight of thy tremendous doom cry to all the nations, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me?"

But, friends, the fact of sympathy's eager love of companionship is true in other instances: I too share the sympathetic avarice of Jeremiah's pity. Do you ask what grief I have, and for whose woes I am a mourner? I point you to the cross, and to the Man of sorrows there. All faithful servants of Christ who love their Master would have their hearers mourn for him, even as the prophet foretold: "They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him." When they think of Calvary, and of their wounded, bleeding Lord, they cannot help imitating Jeremiah, and picturing their Lord as crying from the cross, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." Hence in all ages of the church this has been a favourite text—not as directly meaning what we shall say upon it, but as suggesting an adaptation, and asking to be used in our case as Jeremiah used it in his own. We apply to Jesus and his sufferings to-night the words which the prophet wrote in reference to Judæa and her national sorrow. We hear the Son of God saying in his death pangs to all this vast assembly, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

And this is my first head to-night—the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, are unparalleled. When we have dwelt enough upon this, we will proceed to note, secondly, that they have a deep interest to many; and we will conclude, thirdly, by enquiring whether they have not some interest for you? O that God the Holy Spirit, whose office it is to bear witness to the Lord Jesus, would now bear his testimony in all your hearts, for his mercy's sake.

I. First, then, THE SUFFERINGS OF THE SON OF GOD UPON THE CROSS WERE ALTOGETHER UNPARALLELED.

I tell no idle tale to-night. I draw no picture of romance, but the sorrows which we now relate are matters of fact. Out of the excellent glory let the Lord confirm it to-night, if it be his truth, by the witness of his Spirit.

Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came down in boundless pity among the sons of men, and took upon himself our human nature. Quitting the infinite honours of the skies he came to the lowliness of the manger, and the labour of the carpenter's shop; and here he abode, suffering as veritable man all the sorrows and infirmities of our mortality. In our nature he lived some thirty years or more, enduring much of poverty and labour, and at the end thereof he died, not amid the applause of all mankind, as he deserved, but nailed to a cross, like a felon or a slave, a spectacle of scorn and infamy, the despised and rejected of men.

The sufferings of this divine One were unparalleled, first, because of the dignity of his person, which gave such point to the insult which he endured. Kings have died; philosophers have died; philanthropists have died; but never such a one as this, for he that bled on Calvary was king, and priest, and prophet, a right royal man—and more—the Son of the Highest. God that made the heavens and earth was in personal union with that man who died upon the cross of Calvary. But what stoop must it have been for him,—for the brightness of the Father's

glory to be made the image of shame. A dethroned monarch is always the object of compassion, and a once famous general sitting at the city gate, and begging for a penny of every traveller that passes by, has been in all ages spoken of as a person to be deeply pitied. But what shall I say of him who stood as the centre of angelic hosts, the prince of the kings of the earth? Aside he flung his most divine array; he girded himself with garments of this flesh and blood, and then became a man among men and for men, only to be despised of men. Being here among his own, his own received him not. Instead of receiving him they dragged him to the judgment hall. They scourged him. They took him into the common hall of the soldiery; they spat in his face, they blindfolded him, they buffeted him. They mocked at all his holy offices. They put an old soldier's cloak about him, and then brought him out and cried, "Behold the man." They nailed him to the cross, and then stood there and said, "If he be the Christ, let him come down." They punned upon his prayers, and when he said "Eloi, Eloi," they said "He calleth for Elias." Nothing that shame could invent they spared him: and all this was poured on One whose feet honoured the ground they trod upon, the glances of whose eyes were angels' law, the words of whose mouth were the music of God's ear. "He was despised and rejected of men," even he who was and is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow which was done unto him.

There was also this strange point about our Redeemer's suffering, namely, *the perfect innocence of his character*. Many a man has died innocent of that which was laid to his charge, but no man has been perfectly innocent of every kind of fault. In this man there was never taint of evil. He was born without tendency to sin, for the natural corruption of our nature was not in him; and he lived never doing wrong to man, or woman, or child, and never by omission or by commission violating the divine will of the Most High. He was absolutely perfect, so that he could say when Satan came to assail him, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Now, herein is a sorrow never to be forgotten—that he must bleed and die, and, moreover, that he must so suffer as to be connected with sin. It is anguish and agony for even the breath of evil to blow upon innocence. He was never guilty, and never could have been so in any sense, and yet sin was laid to his charge for our sakes, and he died accused of treason and of blasphemy. In him was no sin, and yet the sins of men were laid upon him. There, bring them here, the sins of ages; heap them on his back, the sins of men that lived before he was on earth, the crimes of multitudes who transgressed in his own day, and the sins of all the ages since—your sins and mine. They are all brought together and massed together: the total sum how dreadful! Hear ye the word, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on HIM the iniquity of us all." The innocent, therefore, not only suffers, but suffers in strange connection with sin; and this must have caused an awful shrinking to our Lord's most holy soul. You and I are comparatively hardened to sin, and therefore it does not so alarm us as it did the perfect soul of Christ, who had no spot or trace of evil upon him. There was one tried for

murder years ago, and some thought it an argument for his innocence that he stood in the dock calm and composed. But others said, "Not so: innocent men are the very persons who shudder most at having such a crime laid to their charge, and he who could bear the charge without emotion is most probably the man who has committed the crime." Truth lies in that observation. For the innocent Christ to be made sin for us, and for the wrath of God to roll over him instead of us, must have caused within his spirit a depth of anguish which the tenderest heart cannot fathom. Behold, and see if there was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow. Was there ever dignity that suffered such indignity, or innocence that came into contact with such a mass of sin, and suffered for it all?

But this is not all, nor half. There was another wonder about the sufferings of Christ, namely, that in his case there was such a *conjunction of griefs*. Have you never noticed that, when you have one trouble, as a rule some other one is absent? Of course, if the north wind blows, the south does not blow too; and if we have the troubles of summer, we do not also endure the evils of winter at the same time. One grief often strangles another in its arms. We read in the Acts of a place where two seas met. Rough navigation there, my brethren, where two seas met, for one sea is often more than enough for the sailor. Sometimes you and I have grief on grief, and sorrow upon sorrow; and things go hard then. As to the Saviour, it seemed as if every form of grief was let loose against him on that dark, that dreadful night. All the winds of woe escaped from their cave at that dread hour. He was heavy within himself, deserted by his friends who ought to have defended him, betrayed by his bosom companion, slandered by false witnesses, hunted down by false-hearted men. He had no one to speak for him, and he was unable for a certain reason to speak for himself. Griefs of body were added to his sadness of soul. Was there a part of his blessed form that escaped from suffering? I know of none. His whole corporeal frame was the centre and seat of pain, a furnace of fever, the melting crucible of death. From the thorn-crowned head to the bleeding foot all, all was wounds and bruises for our sake. But the bodily sufferings were only the body of his sufferings; there was an agony of heart, and mind, and soul. O brethren, if when you have sickness you can keep your spirits up, it does not matter; and peradventure when the spirits sink you are happy if you have no pain at the same time. But to have body and soul at once in the fire, this is, indeed, torture: this is to do business in great waters, where all the waves and billows go over the mariner. Hell from beneath was stirred against him: Satan bade his legions aim all their arrows against his heart. Heaven veiled its sun and left the sufferer in a chill darkness. God did hide his face and make him cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" Earth's inhabitants seemed leagued to cast him out. There is not, to my knowledge, a mitigating circumstance in the woes of Christ. It is bitter, bitter, bitter; and if there be a mixture, it is wormwood mingled with gall. But bitter all, tempestuous all, terrific all. No drop of water, for in his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink. No ray of light: the sun is set. No stable ground of comfort: the very rocks
rend. Heaven and earth stand arrayed against him. Well doth

he cry, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me."

Oh that these lips had language, and could speak aright upon such a theme as this! But I ask you to notice next that there is in our Saviour's sorrow this singular point which is not found anywhere else, namely, that all his sorrow was *voluntarily undertaken*, and voluntarily continued in. When a man feels that it must be, he girds himself to bear the will of destiny; but concerning Christ, he was under no compulsion from any force which he could not himself control. He dies; but he says, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself." He is betrayed into the hands of wicked men, but he says that he could presently pray to his Father, and he would send him twelve legions of angels. He has not a word to say to Pilate, but he had ten thousand words which he might have spoken if he would, only that he could not then have effected the divine purpose or wrought out our salvation. This perfect freedom involved him in a double labour; he had not only to suffer, but to will to suffer even to the end. He had therefore to put a divine restraint upon himself, and to bear on, when his human nature might have suggested that he should bear no more. It did suggest it, so far as it could do so, without a faulty shrinking. "If it be possible," said he, "let this cup pass from me;" but his holy soul came to the rescue of his resolution, for he added, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is not in our power thus to yield ourselves to sorrow. If we gave up ourselves once to the hands of pain or death it would be but one act, and we should then be out of our own power; but our Lord always had himself in his own hand, and hence he made a continuous offering of himself by a distinct act of his will until he expired. Brothers, recollect that if you were to die for your country, you would only then pay the debt of nature a little sooner than it would otherwise be due, but the debt would in any case have had to be paid in due time. If I died to-night for you, I should but anticipate that hour, which may be near enough now, when I must surely die. Jesus needed not to die. There was no necessity, as far as his nature was concerned, that ever he should slumber in a grave. Oh, but this is a death altogether unexampled—voluntarily undertaken, and voluntarily borne for the good of others. Love led his perfect will in sweet captivity, so that he could not do otherwise than die, but with the exception of his own unrivalled love not another cord held him, or could have held him for a moment. Let us give him our deepest love in return for so special a sacrifice.

And this makes it more singular still—that *those for whom he died thus voluntarily were his enemies*. Oh, tell it, tell it all the world over, that Jesus laid down his life for those who hated him, for those who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Tell it in hell, tell it in earth, tell it in heaven! and let the three worlds overflow with wonder at this miracle of love. Let the whole universe hear it—Jesus died for his enemies. His last breath said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He died for those who did not love him, but thirsted for his blood. He died for those who could not see his beauties,—who never will see his beauties unless he work a miracle upon them. He died for you and for me. But oh, how shamefully have the best rewarded

him with chill penurious love! How shamefully are some here present rewarding him at this moment, by living in entire neglect of him—living as if they had nothing to do with the death of Christ at all. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure for a benevolent man one would even dare to die, but “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Hear that. O ye deaf ears, hear that! O ye blind eyes, behold the splendour of this love! O ye hard hearts, feel the magic of this deed! Christ died for the ungodly, for the guilty, for the profane, for the drunken, for the unchaste, for the worst of men,—died that he might purify them, lift them out of their degradation, make new men of them, and prove what heavenly love can do. Men were utterly depraved and wedded to their sins, as mad on sin as the lunatic is mad in his delirium, as eaten up with it as a leper with leprosy; and yet for such Christ died: he gave himself, not for our virtues, but for our sins, and he came to seek and save, not the good, but those that were lost. For such did he die, and therefore his death is altogether unparalleled.

Once more to crown this edifice of wonder. There was this about Christ's sorrow, which was never in any other sorrow under heaven, namely, that *it was expiatory*. Christ was dying and suffering in the stead of others, and by that dying and suffering he was putting away the sin of others. This is the substance of the revelation of God, that Jesus Christ has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and there is virtue in his blood to cleanse from all sin. I hear certain philosophical divines denying this atonement, but I beseech you give no heed to them; they would rob you of your only hope of heaven. Mark you this,—there is nothing left of Christianity when atonement is gone. “The blood is the life thereof,” and if you remove its life the gospel will die. What see you where this atoning sacrifice is left out of the preaching? Why, very soon empty places of worship, for the people soon find that there is nothing there for them, and they will not go where they are mocked with husks. To deny the great doctrine of atonement by the blood of Jesus Christ is to hamstring the gospel, and to cut the throat of Christianity. Look at this house to-night, this spectacle, this gathered throng! Into what corner could another hearer be thrust? One would think from the vehement eagerness to enter that we gave some gorgeous entertainment. Come here any night in all the year, or any morning if you like, and still it is the same. Well, why come the people? To see a man in fine raiment? We wear no millinery. To listen to sweet strains of music and the swell of organs? We have none of it. What come they for? To hear an orator? Far from it. I have never aimed at oratory, or desired to exhibit it. I have preached Christ out of my very soul, and lifted him up as the Saviour of men, and therefore the people throng the house, and they always will while Christ is fully preached in language which they can understand. Men need a Saviour as hungry men need bread, and as thirsty souls need drink, and they know where that is preached which they require. Go, tell the men that preach the new doctrine that they cannot stir a tiny village with their fine theories, after they have preached them once or twice; and yet for twenty-seven years together we can hold a

multitude with no magic but the name of Christ, with no mystery but the cross, the blood, and the one word—"Believe in Christ and live." Therefore preach I the old, old gospel yet again, harping for ever on that one divine string, which hath yet more music in it than all the flutes, harps, sackbuts, psalteries, and dulcimers of modern thought. If you would have sin forgiven, forgiveness is to be found in Jesus, and only there. "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow-like unto his sorrow," for no other sorrow can wipe away sin—not even the pangs of hell can effect expiation; but the sorrow of Christ can put your sins away. Oh, seek a share in the boundless merit of the Crucified. Turn not away, but seek your Saviour's face at once.

II. Thus have I spoken upon the first head, and pretty well exhausted the time: therefore only a minute or two upon the second—**THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS HAVE HAD A DEEP INTEREST IN THEM FOR MANY.**

Oh that I could set him forth before you. There he is! Look ye upon him! He is before my eyes. I see those languid eyes closing in death, I see that glorious head bowing upon his bosom. I see and I adore. I note with grief the gashes made by the nails in his dear hands and feet, from which doth flow the ruddy stream which scatters roses among the lilies of his pure and spotless flesh. I look into his heart and see it breaking: the soldier hath opened a door through which your soul may gaze. My Saviour's death is to me all things, I could live and die contemplating it. It stirs my blood, it opens the fountains of mine eyes, and makes my inmost heart dissolve. Is it not a thing of power to others also? Did I hear one ask, What good has this sorrow ever brought to anyone? Has anybody derived benefit from it? Let me tell you. Multitudes have found in the sufferings of Christ *the cure for their despair*. Read the biographies of converted men, and you shall find cases upon cases where they had been ready to commit suicide, but the sight of a crucified Saviour encouraged them to hope, and gave them rest. Nay, you need not read books: speak to any godly man of your acquaintance, and he will tell you that the wounds of Jesus were and are the fountains of his hope. Many of you could speak for yourselves, and say that nothing could have brought you back from despair on account of sin but a sight of Christ. I cannot speak without remembering my own case, and how bitter were my griefs, how dark my days, how hideous my nights till I saw one hanging on a tree, and my state was changed from continual sorrow into perpetual joy. Can I hear him dishonoured and not be moved? Do you think that those of us who owe all the light we have to Jesus crucified can ever think lightly of him? I pray we never may become so mean, so base. We have a deep and abiding interest in Jesus, for he turned our darkness into day.

In others the sorrows of the cross have wrought a *complete transformation of their lives*. The apostle Paul on the way to Damascus was going to hunt Christians to death, but the voice of one who said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest" changed his mind so completely that he became the greatest of all preachers of Christ. You have, most of you, I dare say, heard of the life of Colonel Gardiner, a dissipated officer, who indulged, as too many soldiers do, in wantonness. One night he had made an appointment of the most vicious kind, and reached the place an hour too

soon. Waiting there alone he thought that he saw upon the wall the Saviour on the cross, and he thought that he heard him say to him, "I did all this for thee: What hast thou ever done for me?" He fled the house; and you know what an earnest soldier of Christ from that moment he became. Such miracles have been wrought in every age, and will be wrought to the end of time. Nor are they so rare that you need search far for them. One and another will tell you if you will listen—some here can tell you for themselves—that the sight of Christ has changed them altogether in a manner as astounding as a miracle. It has been with them as marvellous a change as if Niagara leaping down her profound abyss were suddenly spoken to by the voice which made that mighty flood, and her waters began to leap upward, ascending the steep adown which they have rushed for ages. The transformation of the lives of men by the sight of the cross of Christ is as great a marvel as though rivers should seek their source, or midnight brighten into day. It is matchless, superb—there is nothing like it; and they that have once felt its transforming power laugh at infidelity. "What," say they "no truth in the cross? Let the man that has been a leper, the man that has been lame or blind, suddenly receive a cure, and then tell him that there is nothing in it. 'Pshaw!' says he, 'there is nothing in you, or you would not make the remark,'" and he goes his way, and that is all the answer that he deigns. Matters of actual experience may be contradicted, but they cannot be disproved. Men may say what they will, but we are of the same opinion still, when once the cross has wrought its marvels upon our souls.

Ah, brethren, and think again what power the cross has had on other men's minds to *gird them to heroic deeds*. I shall never forget when I shook the hand of Livingstone. I count it one of the great honours of my life to have known him, and even men of the world will join in doing homage to his name. But it was the love of Christ that made him tread pathless Africa and die among the heathen. He was not the first by many a thousand who counted it all joy to succumb to climate and to perish among strangers for the cross of Christ. Moffat still lives, and what a life! There was a John Williams, of whom you older men can tell, who laid down his life at Erromanga for Christ's sake. These are but the later ranks of a mighty host that counted not life dear to them for Jesus' sake. Look at the first centuries—how men marched to the rack to be tortured, to the stake to be burned, to the amphitheatre to be devoured of beasts for Christ's sake. The lifting up of the little finger of Christ was enough to move hosts of men and women to court death and defy the flames. The Roman empire, with all its legions and cruelties, could not stand against the insignificant, unlettered, humble, but earnest and intense followers of Jesus. The sufferings of Christ made them strong to suffer. Later ages tell the same story. Our own land has seen the heroes of the cross enduring unto the end. Over there at your Smithfield, why, there were men and women there who early in the morning, while yet the sun was scarcely up, were summoned forth to stand at fiery stakes and burn; and they were seen to clap their hands, when every finger was a candle, and cry, "None but Christ! None but Christ!" And the crowd that stood around them, who were they? There were cruel men, and brutal

priests, but there were also men, and women, and children, of whom it is written, in the humble church records of the day, that they went there to see their pastor burnt *to learn the way*. Oh, that is grand!—to learn the way to die when their turn came; for the idea of ever yielding up to the papacy, or of giving up Christ because they must die for him or else deny him, never entered into their heads. Even boys and girls learned at their mother's knee so much of Jesus's sufferings that they became invincible. Ay, and we should be so again if it ever came to the same pass; for the old name and the old love still linger in the hearts of Christians to-day with all their faults and infirmities; and, if it came to battle and to push of pike again, we are as ready, by the good hand and grace of God, as were our Puritan forefathers—our Protestant ancestors—ready to seal the faith with our blood. This is what the cross of Christ can do: it can make men suffer for his name sake.

Ah, but you may not be called to that you say, "What is the use of the cross of Christ to us in everyday life?" Why, it is of this use,—that men who love the suffering Saviour become *patient in their everyday sufferings*. They say to themselves—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine.
Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?"

They learn to hate sin by seeing the agonies by which redemption was obtained: they learn to be upright by seeing with what a price they are bought: they learn to be self-denying at the feet of the Crucified; and this is the good of the cross to them, and this is the way they learn both to live and to die. This black cloth which casts its sombre hue around my platform, is the memorial of one dear soul, my sister, who learned to love the Saviour while she was yet young, and in her early days joined with this church; and in her death, when it was a pang to draw each breath, she found her joy, her victory, in resting in the divine Saviour. She was a soldier's daughter and was not ashamed to join with the despised people of God, and in her long pains and agonizing death she found sustaining power in the doctrine of the cross, and found victory in death.

"Hold thou thy cross before my failing eyes." O Jesus, let me see thee when I can see naught else. At sight of thee I will leap the stream of death. I will defy death, as Samson defied the lion. I will find honey in the vanquished monster if thou be there. It is not death to die if the death of Christ be but the life of the soul.

This is what multitudes of men and women have had to do with Christ. They have not passed him by, but bowed at his feet, and found life, light, joy, perfection, heaven.

III. And I close with this last appeal: what, dear hearers—WHAT HAVE YOU TO DO WITH HIM? "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

Now, I do not suppose that Jesus Christ is much to some that are here present, I mean people that are getting on in the world. Everything is going very easily with you. You are rising like a balloon, you are filled and inflated with prosperity. You are getting as much money as you can count. You are going on very well without a

Saviour. You have your portion in this life. I should not wonder if you turn on your heel and despise him, and say that you do not want a Saviour. We will meet another day, young sir, when all that wine is sour and that gold is corroded, and those pleasures, like the rime of the morning, shall have disappeared beneath the burning sun of care. But for awhile, I doubt not, Jesus Christ will be nothing to you. It is dreary talk, and a weariness to hear about him.

But is there one here heavy of heart? Are there not many here conscious of fault? Are you wrong? Would you be right? Are you guilty? Would you be forgiven? Ah, then, the cross for you! Jesus for you! Turn aside and look at him. Look till your eyes are full of tears. Look till you brush those tears away and say, "I see it all. Jesus has suffered in my stead. I am forgiven. My Father has adopted me. I am his child. I am glad." Oh, guilty ones, there is something in Christ for you, for he died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

Peradventure there is another here who is not so much labouring under a sense of fault as under a sense of aimlessness in life. Do you feel, "Well, somehow, I have no purpose in life. I keep on like a blind horse round a mill, but I do not get any forwarder, and what is more, I do not know what I am toiling for." To bring up my children? Well, perhaps that is done. They are all settled in life, and you say, "I do not know what more is to be done. I do not seem to have any object worth striving after." My Master's sorrows may enlist you. The Red Cross Knight, when he bore the cross upon his arm, as he fought with the Saracen, though he was under a grave delusion, for Christ would not have us fight with deadly weapons, yet felt strong because he thought that the name of Christ was named upon him; but if you become a true knight of the red cross by living for the glory of Christ you will rise to a noble enthusiasm, and find an aim in life of which you will never tire. The love of the Crucified shall be a wellspring of vigour to your own heart. It shall make you brave against all odds, and shall bring you great reward and sure victory. Oh, if I had not an object in life to-day I would wish to give myself to Christ, and then begin to tell of his dear name to others, that I might win their hearts to the love of my sweet Lord; for, as it is, I know of no man I would change with so long as I have but opportunities of spreading abroad the fame and name of Jesus Christ my suffering Lord and royal Master.

Perhaps you are anxious to benefit others. Oh, if you are, you want to be doing something real and effective. The world is going to the bad. There is a great deal of mischief abroad. You say, "I want to do good." Friend, turn aside and look at Christ's sufferings, and see whether you have not there the fulcrum for your lever. To move rocks and mountains here is an unrivalled force; not steam power or dynamite, but something stronger, for an ounce of the doctrine of the cross would blast all the walls of error, and burst the dungeons of misery, if rightly applied. Come you to Christ and see if you have not there by the power of the Holy Ghost an irresistible agent of good to all mankind.

"Oh," says one, "I do not believe in him." What do you believe in?—for whatever you believe in, try to use it for the good of your fellow-men. I would like to see you sending city missionaries from street to

street to preach what you do believe in. Come, be reasonable and do something more than find fault. Some are so fond of pulling down. Would they try a little building up? Come, then. You say that we Christians are doing no good. Just try your own hand at it. Go to the dying: go to the sick; take them bottles of your philosophy, and comfort them with the elixir of scientific doubt. Go ahead! If somebody says that the current system of medicine is faulty, we reply:—Very well, sir; have you found the right medicine? "Yes." Then distribute it, train physicians, and build hospitals. Get to work at it. Why not? Now, you that do not believe in God or Christ, send your own missionaries abroad. Enlighten the heathen by telling them that there is no God, no sin, no hell, no heaven, no soul, no anything. Go into the centre of Africa, and win them from their bloody superstitions by the doctrines of science. Go ahead. If you have a gospel do not hide it. What? You have no zeal in that direction. But why not? There is no particular use in it, is there? Not worth spending your money on. Miserable comforters! Wretched physicians that cannot heal! But now, if you want to know whether there is power in the cross, ask a city missionary to let you go with him for a day. Pitch on the right man, and go and see for yourself. He will show you what the doctrine of the cross can do in comforting, in sobering, in cheering, in elevating. "I do not believe it," says one. No one said you did. I will, however, venture to observe that, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." A good old English proverb, my dear sir. Here is a ship filling with water, and you do not believe in pumps. Very well. I am going on pumping. You are anxious to discuss. Discuss away, but meanwhile I pump. Let every Christian man here make practical use of the cross of Christ, and keep on at it; and if men will not even take the trouble to enquire what are its results, their disbelief is irrational and inexcusable, and they must take the consequences. Our skirts are clear of their blood.

Dear friend, what if it should turn out that you have such a connection with the cross that Christ redeemed you there,—that Christ put your sins away there? What if he so bought you there that he means to have you? What if you are so his that he means to save you? What if, when he died there, he bought for you eternal life, and ensured for you a place in heaven at the right hand of God, to reign there with himself?

"Oh, if I thought that," says one, "I would come to him." Come to him, then, and it is true, for "whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life." Let me say that word over again. "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." If he only believed a minute ago,—if he only believed a second ago, he has not only life but everlasting life. That life, therefore, is a thing that can never die. You have heaven, as well as all the blessings of earth, if you believe in Jesus.

But if you say, "I will have nothing to do with Jesus," I would like you to say so to yourself in a deliberate manner. If Christ be not worth having, say that you will not have him, and say it most distinctly. I feel hopeful when a man will come to a decision one way or the other. The sort of people for whom I tremble are those who say, "I hope it will be all right somehow." O, sirs, do not

hesitate another hour, but answer me as in God's name I question you: Will you have Christ to-night or will you not? Say "Yes" or "No." I would ask you to write down your decision when you get home. Is Christ's yours or not? Sit down deliberately and say, "Yes, my Lord, in the merits of thy death I put my trust"; or else write it if you mean it—"He is not mine at all." We have known some get comfort out of this act of decision. There was a poor girl who had long been a Christian, but she was very sad at heart through sickness; and when her minister came to see her he said to her, "Well, Susan, how is your hope?" She said, "Sir, I am afraid I am not a Christian. I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ." He said, "Why, I always thought you did. You acted as if you did." "No," said she, "I am afraid I have deceived myself, and that I do not love him." The minister wisely walked to the window and wrote on a piece of paper, "I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ," and he said, "Susan, here is a pencil. Just put your name to that." "No, sir," she said, "I could not sign *that*." "Why not?" "I would be torn to pieces before I would sign it, sir." "But why not sign it if it is true?" "Ah, sir," said she, "I hope it is not true. I think I do love him." Get to know where you are, friend. If Baal be God, serve him: if God be God, serve him: if Christ be a Saviour, have him: if he be not a Saviour, do not pretend to serve him. Decide one way or the other. God help you to decide to-night, as you will decide when the heavens are on a blaze, when sun and moon have vanished from their spheres, when the solid earth shall rock and reel, and over all shall be heard the trumpet-note, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment!" There sits the Judge, the Crucified, whose sorrows surpassed all sorrows, but whose glory then shall surpass all glory as he shall divide the saints on the right from the graceless on the left, and from his mouth shall come the final sentence which shall settle the doom of believers and unbelievers.

God bless you, dear friends, every one of you. Henceforth and for ever may you be the Lord's. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm xxii.

Among the Hymns sung was the following by the late Frances Havergal:—

"I could not do without Him!
 Jesus is more to me
 Than all the richest treasures
 Of earth could ever be.
 The more I find Him precious—
 The more I find Him true—
 The more I long to witness
 The self-same bliss in you.

"You need not do without Him,
 For He is passing by;
 He's waiting to be gracious,
 Waiting to hear your cry;

He's waiting to receive you—
 To make you all His own!
 Why will you do without Him,
 And wander on alone?

"Why should you do without Him?
 It is not yet too late;
 He has not ceased His pleading,
 He has not shut the gate.
 He calls you!—hush! He calls you!
 He would not have you go
 Another step without Him,
 Because He loves you so."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT. —

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

“And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.”—Jeremiah iii. 16.

THIS text speaks concerning the material ark. I should like to append to that another, which speaks of the ark spiritually, and tells us where its antitype is to be found.

“And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament (or covenant).”—Revelation xi. 19.

When inward piety is low the externals of religion are frequently cried up. Those who know nothing of God are the very people to exclaim concerning themselves and their brethren, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these.” The Pharisees, who were furthest from God, were the most bitter advocates of ritualism and formalism; they would not even have a man healed on the Sabbath day, or allow the hungry to rub a few ears of corn out of the husks. It is not always so; but yet too often, “The nearer the church the further from God.” The more gown, the less grace. The more phylactery, the less sanctity. The more of ecclesiasticism, the less of true godliness. On the other hand, whenever the Spirit of God is largely poured out, although the ordinances of God are carefully attended to, yet as external things they are sure to be put into their proper place, and that proper place is a secondary one. The spiritual is put foremost and the ritualistic is placed hindmost when grace is largely given. It was so with David in the fifty-first Psalm: when he had made a hearty confession of his sin, and cried to God for mercy, he uttered those memorable words, “Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offerings.” He puts aside the symbol because he has a clear view of the substance. That is exactly the case with the people mentioned in my text: they had been sadly sinful; but God in his mercy promised to turn to them, and to bless them, and bring them back into their own land again, and he says—“And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge

and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more." The visible golden ark, which was so much their glory, should be quite forgotten, because of the gracious visitation of God. That shall be our subject this morning.

First, I shall invite your attention to *the symbol revered*; secondly, we shall see *that reverence obliterated*; and, thirdly, we shall dwell upon *that reverence transferred*; for though we no longer revere the ancient ark of shittim wood overlaid with pure gold, we do honour to that forever-enduring ark of which we read in our second text—"The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his covenant."

I. First, then, let us think upon **THE SYMBOL REVERENCED.**

The ark of the covenant was a small coffer not exceeding four feet and a-half in length by about two feet eight inches in breadth. It was made of an enduring kind of wood, and was covered with pure gold both within and without. Upon the upper part of it was a golden crown, into which fitted a solid slab of gold, which formed the lid of the ark. That golden lid was called the propitiatory or mercy-seat; in the Hebrew, *Kapporeth*, or a place of covering. Upon the two ends of this mercy-seat, and part and parcel of the same solid metal, were two cherubs, with outstretched wings. The Lord said of them, "And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another: toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be." Between those wings, when God was favourable to his people, the bright light, called the Shekinah, was wont to shine forth: and when, once in the year, the high priest went into the innermost place, bearing with him a cloud of incense and sprinkling the blood, he saw the glory of that light.

This ark was the object of great reverence, and very fitly so, because *it symbolized God's presence*, the presence of Jehovah, the living God, in the midst of his people. They saw no similitude, for what likeness can there be of him that filleth all in all? But they knew that God's excellent glory shone above the mercy-seat, and they thought of the ark in connection with the Lord, as David did, when he said, "Thou and the ark of thy strength." It was, therefore, a thing greatly to be revered, for God was there. To no other people had God given such a token of his presence. He walked in the midst of no other camp; but of Israel he had said, "My Spirit shall go with thee." It was the first article of the tabernacle concerning which Moses received instructions, for, indeed, it was the first in honour. Read the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus, and see how speedily the Lord who gave the law provided a chest for its honourable preservation. Although Solomon made most of the furniture of the holy place anew he retained the same ark, which was too much esteemed to be changed. When it was carried abroad in the marchings of the Israelites it always went in front, and it was distinguished from all the other furniture by being covered externally with blue, as if to signify its heavenly character. Lifted high on men's

shoulders, upon golden staves, the blue coloured wrapping of the ark was seen in the van of the Lord's host occupying the place of honour. We do not wonder, therefore, that it was much spoken of and esteemed by the tribes of Israel.

That presence of God meant blessing; for God was with his people in love to them. The Lord abides not with his enemies, but with his chosen. So long as he gave the token of his presence it was a sign that he had not cast them off as hopeless. He still heard their prayers and granted them his favours; for he still remained in residence among them while his mercy-seat was in the holy place. When the ark went into the house of Obed-Edom for a time the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom for the sake of the ark of the Lord. Therefore David was encouraged to bring up the ark into his own city, and he did so with gladness, which he expressed by dancing before the Lord with all his might. Well, then, might the people speak of it, and think of it, and visit it, and magnify it, because it brought blessing to them.

The ark was held in reverence by the Israelites because *it was their leader*. When the time came to march through the wilderness the ark went in the forefront. How often did Moses cry, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered," and on they went across the pathless desert rightly led by this ark of the covenant. When they came to the brink of Jordan, as soon as the feet of the priests that bare the ark touched the waters, the river was parted, and they went through dry shod. It was so trusted in that they bore the ark on one occasion into the battlefield, when God was not with them, and the golden coffer was carried into captivity to vindicate its own honour among the Philistines, by smiting its captors with sore diseases, and breaking in pieces Dagon, their god. A wonderful ark it was when God was with it. It was such a symbol of power that we wonder not that when David brought it up to Mount Zion all the people shouted, and with sound of trumpet celebrated its triumphal march. It was also so much a symbol of holiness that Solomon removed Pharaoh's daughter out of the city of David, for he said, "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David, king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of the Lord hath come."

In Solomon's day the ark was finally installed in the temple, and the king placed over it two greater cherubim, ten cubits high, with outspread wings. These were made of olive wood overlaid with gold, and probably covered the entire structure of the coffer and the smaller cherubim, which were component parts of it. Then they drew out the staves of the ark, signifying that there the ark was to stay; but they left the ends of the staves visible, to show that God might yet depart from them if they sinned against him. In the temple the ark rested until the time of the captivity, and from that time it was no more heard of, and possibly never appeared again in the temple that was built by Zerubbabel or in that which was enlarged and beautified by Herod.

The ark was to the Israelites, after their wanderings were over, *the fixed centre of their nationality*, even as while they were in the wilderness it had always been placed in the centre of the camp. In the desert it had been the central kernel of the whole army. Outside the ark was the tabernacle or holy place, and outside of that, in various rows and

orders, were the tents of the tribes; but the core of it all was this honoured ark. To-day we have a centre to which we rally, a fixed centre which faith perceives in heaven, whither the true ark of the covenant has gone up.

Marvel not that the men of Judah paid great reverence to this ark when in so many ways it was a token for good to them. What they did to this ark is mentioned in the text. First, *they recognised it as the ark of the covenant of the Lord.* They were wont to say, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." They spoke much of it, and prided themselves upon the possession of it. Nay, they not only spoke of it, but *they loved it*; for we read, "Neither shall it come to mind," or as the margin has it, "Neither shall it come upon the heart." The ark of the covenant was upon the hearts of God's people; they had a deep affection for it. When it was carried away captive we read of a godly woman who was seized with sudden travail at the news, while the aged Eli fell backward with horror at the tidings. It was very dear to the people of God, and if it was taken away they reckoned that the glory was departed from them.

Hence, in the next place, *they remembered it*, as the text plainly informs us. If they were captives they prayed in the direction in which the ark was situated; wherever they wandered they thought of God and of the coffer which represented his presence.

Next, *they visited it.* On certain holy days they came from Dan and from Beersheba, even from the utmost ends of their land, in joyful companies, singing from stage to stage, and making joyful holiday as they went up to the place where God did dwell between the cherubim. When they came back they rejoiced because they had worshipped before the ark of the covenant, even before the presence of the Most High God.

Visiting it, they were accustomed also to *speak highly of it*; for in the margin of your Bibles you will find, "Neither shall they magnify it any more." They used to tell to one another what the ark had done; the glory that shone forth from it, the acceptance of the offering whose blood was sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement, and the testimony which was heard from between the cherubic wings. They would tell how the ark divided the Jordan, how it laid the walls of Jericho level with the ground, how it slew the prying men of Bethshemesh and Uzzah, who laid presumptuous hands upon it, and how the glory of the Lord came upon it and filled the temple so that the priests could not stand to minister. Of their God and the ark of his strength they would not cease to sing; for the ark of the covenant was honoured in Israel.

II. Secondly, I would have you observe THAT REVERENCE OBLITERATED. They were to say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord." Yet that fact was to be a blessing. Observe that the words are not spoken as a threatening, but as a gracious promise. Now, this cannot merely mean that they would be without the ark; for they would certainly understand that to be a sign of divine anger. Neither would the mere absence of the ark fulfil the prophet's words; for if the ark were gone they would remember it still, and their hearts wouldanker after it. If they could not visit it, yet it would come to their

minds, and they would speak of it. It was somehow to be a boon to them that they should speak no more of the ark of the covenant, for the text was delivered in the form of a promise. The fact is they were to have done with the symbol because the substance would come. They were no more to speak of the ark itself, because they would have that which the ark was intended to foreshadow. Bear with me with great patience this morning while I try to interest you in the points in which our blessed Lord Jesus Christ is the ark of the covenant now in the temple of God for us.

Our Lord Jesus by his coming has put out of his people's thoughts the material ark of the covenant, because its meaning is fulfilled in him; and this, first, in the sense of *preservation*. The ark was intended to be a sacred treasury in which God laid up the two tables of stone upon which the law was written, that they might be kept there as priceless things, not to be commonly handled or even seen, but shut up there as the most precious gifts of heaven. We know not where the tablets are now, and we know not what has become of the golden chest; but where is the law now? Once it lay broken at your feet and mine, even as the tables were shattered at the feet of Moses. When Moses takes the tables of the law into his hand he soon grows angry with the sinful people, and he breaks them to pieces at the foot of the mount. But where is the law now? In Christ, for "he is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." "How I love thy law," says David. David knew where the law was, and where it could become an object of love, even in the hand of a mediator. The law apart from Christ is a terror to our guilty souls, because it is a law broken, and therefore condemning; but the law in Christ Jesus, honoured and fulfilled by him, is a delightful sight to true worshippers. In him the law is more honoured than by any merely human obedience, and it smiles upon us as if we had perfectly obeyed it. The law fulfilled is our confidence as much as the law violated was our dread. We think nothing of the ark now, and we think nothing of the tablets of stone; but we do think everything of Christ Jesus, "who is made of God unto us righteousness"; for he has completely kept the law; for he said, "Thy law is within my heart." It was not within his heart alone, but within all his life; his whole thoughts, words, and acts went to make up a golden chest in which the precious treasure of the perfect law of God should be contained. O come, let us magnify his blessed name!

Next, the ark signified *propitiation*; for over the top of the sacred box which held the two tables of the law was the slab of gold called the mercy-seat, which covered all. We will not talk of that golden covering now, but we will speak of Jesus, our blessed Lord, who covers all. When God looks down upon his law, he does not see it nakedly, but he beholds it in the person of his Son. He sees it there perfectly preserved without taint or flaw of any kind, and he rejoices therein. You and I magnify the Lord that instead of having a naked law to look at, which would flash devouring flame upon us, we see the law in Christ covered with mercy, fulfilled by love on our behalf. We often speak of the mercy-seat; but do we, so often as we should, remember that Jesus Christ himself is that mercy-seat? There is no mercy-seat to which

we can draw nigh in prayer except the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who is the propitiation for our sins, and through whom our supplications are accepted. "Ah," said the Jew, "we have a mercy-seat that covers all." "Ah," say we, "but we have one who does not do that typically, and in outward pattern alone, but he is the real covering upon which we lay our prayers and thanksgivings, and find ourselves accepted." We come not to God on the footing of the law, but the interposing propitiation covers all, and comes between, and upon that mercy-seat we offer our petitions and praises. That is a second blessed reason why we will say no more, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord," neither shall it come to mind, for Jesus is the propitiatory for us.

The next word is a very blessed one, and that is *covenant*. The ark was called "the ark of the covenant." It represented a covenant of works, as it was a part of a visible sanctuary; and, ah, how soon was that covenant broken! There is no wonder that in the breaking of that covenant the golden pot of manna was lost, and that Aaron's rod that budded was no more seen; for we are told in the Chronicles that when they opened the ark, in the days of Solomon, there was nothing found in it "save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt." Paul tells us that they were there originally, and so it is probable that they were taken away by the Philistines. Ah, how soon we should lose the sweet things of God if we were under the covenant of works, and how soon we should miss the gentle sovereignty of his shepherd rod! I thank and bless God that in Christ Jesus we have a covenant of grace which can never fail, and never can be broken, and in him we have all that our souls desire: pot of manna and rod of Aaron, covenant provision and covenant rule we find in him. Dear hearer, have you ever seen Christ as your covenant? It is not every believer that has seen him in that light. When we first come to Christ we look to him as our Saviour, and we are lightened, and a very blessed look it is. It may not be till years after that we come to understand that God has entered into covenant with us in Christ, that he will bless us, and sanctify us, and keep us to the end. But, mark you, while a knowledge of Christ as a Saviour gives you the bread of life, yet the "wines on the lees well refined" and the "fat things full of marrow" are unknown to you till you can spell that word "covenant." Oh, how I wish some of the people of God understood it, and realized that there is established between God and us in the person of Christ Jesus a covenant ordered in all things and sure. May the Holy Ghost teach you this. God has pledged his honour for the salvation of his people, and he has sealed the covenant with the precious blood of Jesus, and therefore he will not turn away from it, but will keep it for his Son's sake. Oh, blessed Jesus, we want no ark of the covenant; for thou art the covenant itself to us, and in thee we rejoice.

Fourthly: because this ark was the ark of the covenant of God it was from it that he was accustomed to reveal himself, and so it is called the "ark of testimony." Jehovah often spoke from off the mercy-seat to his waiting people. His priests and prophets heard a voice coming from the thick darkness of the secret chamber wherein God dwelt,

a voice from off the mercy-seat giving them promises of succour in their times of need. It was a great thing to possess what they called "the oracle." No other people had a true oracle except these chosen ones of God; but now that its voice is silent we need not regret it, for we have another oracle. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." His Son is the testimony of the Father's mind; "He that hath seen me," saith he, "hath seen the Father." In all the world of nature, in all the realm of providence, in all the books of revelation, God is seen; but nowhere as he is seen in the person of Jesus Christ—Jesus, the Word, is the plainest revelation of God. His sacrifice is the heart of God writ out in readable characters. Jesus Christ is "the testimony." Come, then, beloved, let us rejoice in the faithful and true Witness. Some will say that they know God by study, others declare that they have found out God by reflection, and certain dream that they perceive him by imagination; but all their knowledge put together cannot equal their blessed testimony of God which he hath given us concerning himself in the manifestation of his incarnate, holy, obedient, suffering, dying, risen Son. We say no more, "the ark of the testimony," but we rejoice that God was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, and saw the Father in the Son.

We have only reached the middle of the subject now: this ark also signified *enthronement*; for the top of the ark was, so to speak, the throne of God. It was "the throne of the heavenly grace." There God reigned and dwelt; that is, typically. It was a throne to which petitioners came with their pleas to obtain favours at the hand of the great King. Where now is the visible throne of God? Ah, sirs, his holy place has been broken down, and he dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that is to say of this building. There is no visible throne of God upon the face of the earth now. Whereunto shall ye liken the throne of the Most High? We have heard of thrones of mighty kings adorned with gold, and ivory, and pearls, and gems, till they have shone like rainbows; but what would these trifles be to the God of the whole earth? If you would see the throne of God, behold the person of the Christ; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. The Lord reigneth from the tree, from the cross: here is the kingdom of God set up in the person of Christ Jesus among the sons of men. Oh what a blessing to have such a throne to come to—to Jesus himself who is the throne of the invisible God! We talk no longer of the ark, and of its gold, and of its crown, and of its golden lid, and of the winged cherubs; for the Lord Jesus is infinitely better than these. Oh, our beloved Lord and Master, thou dost chase away these shadows from our minds, for the very throne of God art thou!

Out of this grows the next idea, that as it was the place of God's enthronement, so it was the door of man's *approach*. Men never came nearer to God on earth typically than when they stood in the holy place close by the ark. Israel was nearest to God symbolically on that day when the atonement had been made and accepted, and her priest stood before the ark awe-stricken in the presence of God. You and I need not speak of the ark of the covenant; for we have a blessed way of

approach. We do not come to Christ once in the year only, but every day in the year, and every hour of the day. He who came but once in the year came tremblingly. The Jews have a tradition that they put a cord about the foot of the High Priest, so that if he should die before the ark they might draw out his corpse; such was their servile fear of God. The tradition shows what was the trembling nature of that entrance within the veil: how different from the apostle's words, "Let us come boldly unto the throne of the heavenly grace." We are not afraid of being stricken with death there: we are full of reverence, but we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. There is no approaching God except in Christ; but in Christ our approach to God may be as near as possible. Come nearer, nearer still: it is your fault that you do not come near enough. There is nothing to tremble at here,—come right up to God and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend. I would leave others to worship as they find they can; but to me the prayers of our national church are very beautiful, but, oh, how cold! What a long way off is God in the Liturgy! What word is there in it of childlike delight in God? Hence certain brethren who have been accustomed to that style of praying chide us for our boldness and familiarity in prayer. They think we are presumptuous in drawing so near to God. Brethren, we do not marvel at your judgment, nor complain of it. We would not condemn you for your distant prayers; but we cannot yield to your censure of our bolder approach, for we have in our bosoms a sense of acceptance and a spirit of adoption which will not let us speak with God otherwise than as his favoured children. We come boldly because we come through Jesus. Who is afraid of Jesus? Who shudders when drawing near to him? And if *he* be the mercy-seat to which we come, and the place where the Father meets us, we feel that he permits the holy familiarity, the humble freedom which is suggested to our hearts by the spirit of adoption.

I must go a step further—the ark was the place of *gracious power*. On the top of the mercy-seat stood cherubic figures, and, notwithstanding all that learned men may have said, I do not think that any idea is nearer the mark than that these cherubim were types of angelic power, and of all the powers of providence which God is pleased to use in the behalf of his people. Notice how frequently the Word associates angels with our Lord; for instance, when Jacob saw the ladder which reached to heaven, and God at the top of it, there were angels ascending and descending upon it. Cherubim were on all the curtains of the most holy place which enclosed the ark, and the ministry of angels is interwoven into the great covenant plan of salvation. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Consider, then, that the angels on the mercy-seat typify the power of God by which he will defend his people. Right well did he defend them, for who could harm them when he was in the midst of them? Yet we will not speak of the ark, neither will we remember it, neither will we visit it; for we see in Christ Jesus that all the power of God is on our side: he is "God with us," and if God be with us, who can be against us? Every angel is the servant of our covenant Head, and so the guardian of every member of Christ. As he might have summoned twelve legions of angels by one uplifted glance

to heaven, so will he fill the mountain with horses of fire and chariots of fire whenever his people need such succour. The stars in their courses fight for the Saviour and for the saved ones: nothing shall by any means harm them. In heaven, and earth, and hell the warrant of the great King stands in full force, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm;" and this protection comes to us because we are preserved in Christ Jesus.

An eighth explanation, however, I must close with, so far as this second head is concerned. The ark was much revered by the Jews, because it was *the centre* of their nationality. Around the ark in the wilderness gathered all the tribes. The pillar of fire and cloud above the ark of the covenant was God's flaming standard marking the pavilion where the Lord of hosts abode. After they were settled in Canaan, it was the centre of the nation; thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of our God. To-day we have no such sacred ark or chest, we have no palladium or central standard. There is a church which has a man they call infallible, who is her centre; and there are others who in their cravings after uniformity in the churches would, I have no doubt, soon create a second hierarchy, and bring forth by prodigious birth a second pope; but it is not so among us. God will not have it so; he will have no human centre; and our very divisions are overruled to prevent such a thing. But there is one centre to which all God's people gather; there is one name above every name, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Find me a dozen spiritual men, and, to describe their different modes of thought, one of them may be called a Baptist, another an Episcopalian, a third a Presbyterian, a fourth a Methodist, and so forth; but let them sit together and begin to talk of the things of God, and of the covenant of grace, and of the work of the Spirit in the soul, and of the preciousness of the blood of Jesus, and you will see that they are one. Though they talk with various brogues, their language is one. Even as men from Somersetshire, or Essex, or Yorkshire, all differ and yet all are Englishmen; so are Christians of various denominations one in the common language of the cross of Christ. They say that Christians ought to be one, and so we ought; but I go further, and assert that all who are in Christ are already one. When our Lord prayed, "That they all may be one," was he unheard? Was his prayer unavailing? I believe it was answered, and that to this day there is a vital union among all the people of God in every place, and though they sometimes try to conceal that unity, yet the love of Christ will out and will fuse them into one. Put two mere theologians together, and they will fight like Kilkenny cats; but bring two spiritual men together at the cross, and they will lie down like two lambs: they cannot help it, they must love each other in Christ. There is, there must be, an essential unity among those who are quickened by the Spirit: and I rejoice and glory that the name, the person, and the work of Jesus are at this hour the centre of Christendom. Talk not of the ark, neither visit it, neither let it come to mind; for the King himself is in the midst of us, "the standard-bearer among ten thousand."

III. Thirdly, let us see THIS REVERENCE TRANSFERRED. Let us

render to Jesus the honour which aforetime was offered to the ark. First: let us say that Jesus is our covenant. We are told, "They shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord." People must talk, it is natural to them, they must say something—what else are their tongues for? Let us, then, say concerning Christ that he is the ark of the covenant of the Lord. Come, let us each one say it for himself—"Lord Jesus, I am in covenant with God through thee. Jesus, thou art my propitiation, by thee I approach unto the Father." Recognize this truth for yourself, my brother, and it will be a grand day for you. When you have said it to yourself, say it to those about you. Say it to strangers, but especially say it to your own brethren. "They that feared the Lord spake often one to another," and what better subject could they have than to say one to another, "Brother, what fellowship we have with God in Christ! What a covenant there is between us and him! Oh how sweetly doth Christ cover our sins! How blessedly doth he fulfil the law! How sweetly doth he bring us into fellowship with angels, and how doth he enable God to shine forth upon us!" Say this, say it often, nobody will rebuke you; it is a subject upon which you may be as fluent as you please. When you have said all you know, say it over again, and when you have said it again, say it a third time. This is a kind of note of which the human ear, when once it is cleansed, never grows weary.

The text takes you a step further; for it says of the original ark, "neither shall it come to mind," or (I give the margin), "neither shall it come upon your heart." Brethren, let Christ *come upon your heart*, and dwell there. Beloved, let us not have Christ in the head, but Christ in the heart. Know all you can about him; but love him on account of everything you know; for everything we learn about Christ ought to be another argument for affection to him. How I loved him when I only knew myself a sinner and Christ a Saviour; but oh, I love him more as I begin to see my greater need and his greater fulness; as I see my greater sinfulness and his greater graciousness! Oh for a great Christ! Oh to see him grow upon us. Oh to get more knowledge, and then to have our hearts enlarged that we may love him more and more! Carry Christ in your heart, even as the Israelite bore the ark in his affections. Oh love the Lord, all ye his saints! You can love other things too much; but not your Lord. Embrace him; cry in the language of the Song, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." Outsiders do not understand the Song: they say it is a mere love ditty. They never will understand it till the Lord Jesus is laid on their hearts; but when he is once there—their joy, their all—they will need just such golden speech as Solomon's Song, and every word of it will be dear to their souls. Let us, then, love our Lord with all our hearts.

And, next, if we should ever grow dull or cold at any time, let us take the third step in the text, and let us *remember* the Lord.

"What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still."

If I have not this enjoyment now, I will remember it, and struggle till I find my Lord again. O my Lord, I will remember thee. If I forget, let my heart forget to beat.

- “Gethsemane, can I forget?
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee!
- “When to the cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! my sacrifice!
I must remember Thee.
- “Remember thee, and all thy pains,
And all thy love to me;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember thee.”

mory, leave no other name than that of Jesus recorded upon thy
Let us sometimes set apart a little space for the exercise of
nory. It is good for children at school to have their memories
Should not we sometimes, especially we who speak so much,
e alone and sanctify our memory by going over all the blessings
ovenant which come to us by Christ, all the glory of his per-
l all the wonders of his work. Oh, yes, we must remember it!
next thing is, let us *visit* him. We cannot set out on journeys
go to Jerusalem on foot,—little bands of us together; yet let
Jesus. Let us continually come to the mercy-seat alone. Who
ows the worth of prayer but wishes to be often there? Next,
me up by twos and threes. You that live at home and seldom
could you not every now and then during the day say to your
she is a Christian, or to your sister who lives with you, “Come,
ave a five minutes’ visit to the ark of the covenant; let us go to
d and speak with him; may be he will speak with us. Perhaps
not been agreeing as we should together, let us go and hear
d the Lord will speak, for he may speak peace to us, in more
han one. Perhaps we have had a trouble to-day, and we do not
way—let us go up to the ark of the covenant and hear what the
ill tell us. Peradventure the Lord will say, ‘This is the way,
in it,’ and we shall know what to do.” Frequently in twos and
isit Christ your ark, and take care also to join the great caravans
h prayer. One starts in this place every Sunday at seven o’clock
orning, and another at the hour of ten. Join those bands of
t. A still larger company goes up to the oracle on Monday nights
o’clock. Some twelve or fifteen hundred of us are usually
d in happy fellowship going up to the mercy-seat on Mon-
A very blessed little company meet on Thursday nights before
my sermon, and they say, “Come and let us go and enquire
ord, and ask his blessing upon his servant.” Besides these,
e meetings for prayer in this place at so many hours that I
now mention them all. If you live where they are giving up
meetings, carry home a live coal and drop it into your minister’s
“Ah,” say you, “he might not like it.” That is very likely,
ertainly needs setting on fire if he lets the prayer-meeting go out.
s without prayer-meetings! Pull them down, their day is over!
e preacher’s mouth if he does not pray, and let his church be
l to the winds; for the church that forgets to assemble for

prayer has "Ichabod" written on its walls. No prayer, no power. The ark of the covenant is gone when the people no longer come together to cry unto the Lord in their companies. Let us visit the ark, then, constantly together; let us go up to the Holy Place that we may speak with the Most High!

The last thing is, "Neither shall that be done any more"; but the margin has it, "Neither shall that be *magnified* any more." Transfer your reverence, then, and as you cannot magnify the literal mercy-seat, come and magnify Christ, who is the real mercy-seat. Oh, that I knew how to speak words worthy to lie under the soles of my Master's feet! Oh, that I could speak a sentence that was fit to be laid in the road like the palm branches, with which the disciples strewed his way, not worthy to be touched by his feet, but by the feet of the beast that he rode upon! I am not worthy to unloose his shoe latchet. He is so glorious that archangels fall on their faces to adore him. Heaven is splendid, but the splendour of heaven is the presence of my Lord and Master. His throne is a glorious high throne, but it owes its glory and its height to him that sits upon it. Hallelujah unto thee, O Christ. Hallelujah for ever and ever! for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood! If the Jew was ever permitted to look upon the golden chest of the ark, he saw but little compared with what I see in thee, thou man, thou God! The wood that could not rot, covered over with precious gold, was a poor representation of his perfect manhood and glorious Godhead. The ark was crowned, but we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels, and crowned King of kings and Lord of lords. Again my heart cries hallelujah! The Jew could but see a slab of gold that was called the throne of God, but we see the spotless, perfect life, and infinitely precious atonement of Christ, which are better than the much fine gold. I see God, not as a light for the eyes, but as shining upon the soul in Jesus my Lord. Oh, the glory, the glory of that light! I am reconciled! I am a child of God! I am brought near! Jehovah speaks to me! I speak to him! Hallelujah! All praise to him through whom such fellowship is rendered possible, so that a man can see God and live! Glory, glory be unto him who is now in the temple above. The veil is rent, and faith can see Jesus, to whom we come this day. God bless you, beloved. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews viii.,
ix. 1—5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—132, 373, 181.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MONGREL RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2ND, 1881, BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So these nations feared the Lord, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day."—2 Kings xvii. 41.

"So do they unto this day," said the writer of the Book of Kings, who has long since passed away unto his fathers. Were he alive now he might say concerning the spiritual descendants of these Samaritans, "So do they unto this day." This base union of fearing God and serving other gods is by no means obsolete. Alas, it is too common everywhere, and to be met with where you might least expect it. From generation to generation there have been mongrel religionists, who have tried to please both God and the devil, and have been on both sides, or on either side, as their interest led them. Some of these wretched blenders are always hovering around every congregation, and my hope is that I may convince the consciences of some here present that they themselves are guilty, and that of them it might be said, as of these Assyrian immigrants, "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods." My sermon will by no means be an essay upon an extinct race, but it may be placed among "the present-day papers," for "so do they unto this day." He that hath ears to hear, let him hear, and to whomsoever the word shall apply let its rebuke be taken home, and through the teaching of the Holy Spirit may it produce decisive results.

I. I shall first call your attention to THE NATURE OF THIS MONGREL RELIGION. It had its good and bad points, for it wore a double face. *These people were not infidels.* Far from it: "they feared the Lord." They did not deny the existence, or the power, or the rights of the great God of Israel, whose name is Jehovah. They had not the pride of Pharaoh who said, "Who is Jehovah that I should obey his voice?" They were not like those whom David calls "fools," who said in their hearts, "There is no God." They had faith, though only enough to produce fear. They knew that there was a God; they feared his wrath, and they tried to appease it. So far they were hopeful persons, and under the influence of a feeling which has often led up to better things. It was better to dread God than to despise him; better slavishly to fear than

stupidly to forget. We would not have men so foolish as to doubt the existence of God, nor so profane as to defy him. There was something commendable about men of whom it could be said that they feared Jehovah, even though that fear was a selfish and servile one, and was by no means so efficacious upon them as it ought to have been, for it did not cause them to put away their idols.

Another good point about these mixed religionists was that they were *willing to be taught*. As soon as they found that they were not acting rightly towards the God of the land, they sent a petition to their supreme ruler, the king of Assyria, setting forth their spiritual destination. Church and State were fused in those days, and therefore they applied to their king that he would help them in their religious distress, and he acted to the best of his light; for he sent them one of the priests of the old religion of the land. This man was a Bethelite, one who worshipped God under the symbol of an ox, which the Scripture calls a calf. He was a very slight improvement upon a heathen; but we must be glad even of small progress. They were quite willing to be taught the manner of the God of the land, and so they installed this priest at Bethel, and gathered about him to know what they should do. We have people around us unto this day who are glad to hear the gospel, and sit with pleasure under our ministry, and if the word be faithfully preached they commend the preacher and give a gratified attention to the things that proceed out of his mouth; and yet they are living in known sin. Albeit they do not practically turn from sin and renounce the service of Satan, yet are they willing to bow with the righteous, to sing their psalms and assent to their prayers, and to accept their confession of faith. They are a teachable sort of people, so far as mere hearing goes; but there they stop.

Though these strangers feared Jehovah, and were willing to learn the way of his worship, yet *they stuck to their old gods*. "Ah," said the Babylonian, "I listen respectfully to what you have to say of this God of the land; but Succoth-benoth for me; when I go home I shall offer sacrifice to him." The men of Cuthah said, "Verily this is good doctrine concerning the God of Israel; but the god of our fathers was Nergal, and to him will we cleave"; and the Sepharvites, though they wished to hear of the pure and holy Jehovah, and therefore learned from his law the command, "Thou shalt not kill," yet still they passed their children through the fire to Moloch, and did not cease from that most cruel of all religious rites. Thus you see that this mingle-mangle religion left the people practically where they were: whatever their fear might be, their customs and practices remained the same. Have you never met with persons of the same mongrel kind? If you have never done so, your class of acquaintances must be superior to mine. At this moment I shall not speak at random, but aim at individual cases; for I know of persons who come to this place of worship with great regularity, and yet they serve their sins, and obey their own vicious passions. They take delight in the services of this house, and yet they are much at home with the god of this world. Some worship a deity quite as horrible as Moloch, whose name in the olden time was Bacchus—the god of the wine-cup and the beer-barrel. They pay their eager devotions at his shrine, and yet they would be numbered with the people of God. They

were drunk last night, and yet they are here this morning : possibly they will keep sober to-day ; but they will not let many days pass before they will once more stagger before their abominable idol. In all places of worship there are people of this kind. Do not look round to see if there is a person present dressed like a working man, for I have not the poor in my eye at this time. Alas, this vice is to be met with in one rank as well as another, and the person I mean looks quite respectable, and wears broadcloth. Many worshippers of Bacchus do not drink so as to be found drunk and incapable in the street. O no ; they go upstairs to their beds in their own houses, so that their condition is not observed ; but still they must know that they are verging upon intoxication, if not actually gone. Woe unto such, who, while they pretend to be worshippers of Jehovah, are also worshippers of the beastly god of drunkenness. Is that too harsh a word ? I beg the beasts' pardon for thus slandering them. Alas, there are others who adore the goddess Venus, the queen of lust and uncleanness. I say no more. It is a shame even to speak of things which are done of them in secret. Too often the god is Mammon, who is as degraded a deity as any of them. Such turn religion into a means of gain, and would sell Jesus himself for silver. The sin of Judas is one of which we may say, "So do they unto this day." Judas is an apostle, he listens to the Master's words, he preaches at the Master's command, and he works miracles in the Master's name ; he also keeps the bag and manages the finance for Christ's little company, and he does it so carefully and economically that what he filches for himself is not missed, and he remains in good repute. Judas professes to serve Jesus, but all the while he is really serving himself, for secretly he abstracts from the treasury somewhat for his own pocket. "He had the bag and kept that which was put therein." There are such still in the churches of God : they do not actually steal, but they follow Jesus for what they can make or get out of him and his disciples. The symbols of their worship are the loaf and the fish. Now, this is as degrading a form of worship as the adoration of graven images. Gain is the god of many in all congregations : they seek Jesus, not because they care for his words, but because they eat of the loaves. They fear the Lord, but they serve other gods.

Are there not to be found in the world men whose very calling is contrary to the spirit of true godliness ? I did know, and may I never know again such an one, a man apparently most devout and gracious, who was a deacon of a church, and passed round the communion cup ; and yet over the worst drinking dens in the town where he lived, where the lowest harlots congregated, you would see the man's name, for he was the brewer to whom the houses belonged—houses which had been purposely adapted at his expense for purposes of vice and drunkenness. He took the profits of a filthy traffic, and then served at the Lord's table. I would judge no man, but some cases speak for themselves. God save the man that can pander to the devil, and then bow down before the Most High. Persons are to be found, without a lantern and candle, who earn their money by ministering at the altars of Belial, and then offer a part of it to the Lord of hosts. Can they come from the place of revelling to the chamber of communion ? Will they bring

the wages of sin to the altar of God? He who makes money over the devil's back is a hypocrite if he lays his cankered coin at the apostles' feet. "Thy money perish with thee." How some men can rest in their impious pretensions it is not for me to guess; but methinks if their consciences were quickened, it would strike them as being a horrible thing in the land that they should be fearing the Lord, and serving other gods. I knew one who was always at the place of worship, prayer-meetings, and all, and yet he had forsaken the wife of his youth, and was the companion of gamblers, and drunkards, and the unclean. I know another of a much milder type: he is a regular hearer, but he has no sense of true religion. He is a steady, hard-working man; but he lives to hoard money, and neither the poor nor the church of God ever get a penny from him: bowels of compassion he has none. He is a stranger to private prayer, and his Bible is never read; but he never misses a sermon. He never lifts his thoughts above the bench at which he works, or the shop in which he serves, his whole conversation is of the world, and the gain thereof, and yet he has occupied a seat in the meeting-house from his youth up, and has never thought of leaving it except at quarter-days, when he is half a mind to give it up and save the few shillings which it costs him. Oh, sad, sad, sad! I can understand the man who honestly says, "I am living for the world and have no time for religion." I can understand the man who cries, "I love the world and mean to have my fill of it." I can understand the man who says, "I shall not pretend to pray or sing psalms, for I do not care about God or his ways"; but how can I comprehend those who are faithful to the outward part of religion, and profess to receive the truth, and yet have no heart for the love of Jesus, no care for the service of God? Oh, unhappy men, to come so near salvation in appearance, and to be so far off in reality! How can I explain their conduct? Truly, I must leave them among the mysteries of the moral world; for "they fear the Lord and serve their graven images unto this day." So far have we spoken upon the nature of this patched-up religion, this linsey-woolsey piety. May we have none of it.

II. Let us now consider THE MANNER OF ITS GROWTH. However came such a monstrous compound into this world?

Here is the history of it. *These people came to live where the people of God had lived.* The Israelites were most unworthy worshippers of Jehovah; but, still, they were known to others as his people, and their land was Jehovah's land. If the Sepharvites had stopped at Sepharvaim they would never have thought of fearing Jehovah; if the men of Babylon had continued to live in Babylon they would have been perfectly satisfied with Bel, or Succoth-benoth, or whatever the name of their precious god might be: but when they were fetched out from their old haunts, and brought into Canaan, they came under a different influence, and a new order of things. God would not allow them to go the whole length of idolatry in his land: though he had cast out his people, yet still it was his land, and he would make these heathens know it, and show some little decency in their new abode. Now, it sometimes happens to utter worldlings that they are dropped into the midst of Christian people, and they naturally feel that they must not be different from everybody about them. A kind of fashion is set by the professors

among whom they dwell, and they fall into it. If they do not become gracious people themselves they try to look a little like them. Everybody in the village attends a place of worship, and the new comers do the same, though they have no heart to it. They have not the courage of their want of conviction, so they just drift with the current, and as it happens to run in a religious direction they are as religious as the rest. Or it may be they have a godly mother, and their father is a believer, and so they adopt the traditions of the family. They would like to be free to forsake the ways of piety, but they cannot be quite so unkind to those whom they love, and so they yield to the influences which surround them, and become in a measure fearers of God, out of respect to their neighbours or their families. This is a poor reason for being religious.

Something else happened to these Assyrian immigrants which had a stronger influence still. At first they did not fear God, but *the Lord sent lions among them*. Matthew Henry says, "God can serve his own purposes by which he pleaseth, little or big, lice or lions." By the smaller means he plagued the Egyptians, and by the greater these invaders of his land. There is no creature so small or so great but God can employ it in his service and defeat his enemies thereby. When these lions had torn one and another, then the people trembled at the name of the God of the land, and desired to know the manner in which he would be worshipped. Affliction is a wild beast by which God teaches men who act like beasts. This is the growth of mongrelists. First, they are among godly people, and they must, therefore, go a little that way; and next, they are afflicted, and they must now go further still. The man has been ill, he has seen the brink of the grave; he has promised and vowed to attend to good things, in the hope that God would relent and permit him to live. Besides that, the man's extravagance has brought him into difficulties and straits; he cannot go so far or so fast as he formerly did, and hence he inclines to more staid and sober ways. He dares not follow his bent, for he finds vice too expensive, too disreputable, too dangerous. Many a man is driven by fear where he could not be drawn by love. He does not love the Lamb, but he does fear the lions. The rough voices of pain, poverty, shame, and death work a kind of law-work upon certain consciences which are insensible to spiritual arguments. They are forced, like the devils, to believe and tremble. Apprehension does not in their case lead to conversion, but it compels an outward respect for divine things. They argue that if the ills they feel do not reform them they may expect worse. If God begins with lions, what will come next? Therefore, they outwardly humble themselves, and yield homage to the God they dread.

But notice, that *the root of this religion is fear*. There is no love on the right side; that affection is in the opposite scale. Their hearts go after their idols, but to Jehovah they yield nothing but dread. How many there are whose religion consists in a fear of hell, a dread of the consequences of their sin. If there were no hell they would drink up sin as the ox, standing knee-deep in the stream, sucks in the water. If sin were not followed with inconvenient consequences, they would live in it as their element, as fishes swim in the sea. They are only kept under

by the hangman's whip or the jailer's keys. They dread God, and this is but a gentler form of hating him. Ah, this is a poor religion, a religion of bondage and terror. Thank God, dear friends, if you have been delivered from it; but it is sure to be the characteristic of a fusion of fearing God and serving other gods.

One reason why they dropped into this self-contradictory religion was that *they had a trimming teacher*. The king of Assyria sent them a priest: he could not have sent them a prophet, but that was what they really wanted. He sent them a Bethelite, not a genuine servant of Jehovah, but one who worshipped God by means of symbols; and this the Lord had expressly forbidden. If this priest did not break the first commandment by setting up other gods, yet he broke the second by making an image to represent the true God. What saith the Lord? "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them." This priest taught them the calf worship, but he winked at their false deities. When he saw them each one bowing before his own idol, he called it a natural mistake, and by no means spake indignantly to them. If one of them worshipped Succoth-benoth, so long as he also brought an offering to Jehovah, he was not so uncharitable as to condemn him. He cried, "Peace, peace," for he was a large-hearted man, and belonged to the Broad Church who believe in the good intentions of all men, and manufacture excuses for all the religions of the age. I know of no surer way of a people's perishing than by being led by one who does not speak out straight, and honestly denounce evil. If the minister halts between two opinions, do you wonder that the congregation is undecided? If the preacher trims and twists to please all parties, can you expect his people to be honest? If I wink at your inconsistencies will you not soon be hardened in them? Like priest, like people. A cowardly preacher suits hardened sinners. Those who are afraid to rebuke sin, or to probe the conscience, will have much to answer for. May God save you from being led into the ditch by a blind guide.

And yet is not a mangle-mangle of Christ and Belial the common religion of the day? Is not worldly piety, or pious worldliness, the current religion of England? They live among godly people, and God chastens them, and they therefore fear him, but not enough to give their hearts to him. They seek out a trimming teacher who is not too precise and plain-spoken, and they settle down comfortably to a mongrel faith, half truth, half error, and a mongrel worship half dead form, and half orthodoxy. God have mercy upon men, and bring them out from the world; for he will not have a compound of world and grace. "Come ye out from among them," saith he, "be ye separate: touch not the unclean thing." "If God be God, serve him: if Baal be God, serve him." There can be no alliance between the two. Jehovah and Baal can never be friends. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "No man can serve two masters." All attempts at compromise or comprehensiveness in matters of truth and purity are founded on falsehood, and falsehood is all that can come of them. May God save us from such hateful double-mindedness.

Thus have I described the nature and the growth of this cross-bred religion.

III. Thirdly, let us estimate THE VALUE OF THIS RELIGION. What is it worth? First, it must evidently be *feeble* on both sides, because the man who serves Succoth-benoth cannot do it thoroughly if all the while he fears Jehovah; and he who fears Jehovah cannot be sincere if he is worshipping Moloch. The one sucks out the life of the other. Either one or the other alone might breed an intense worshipper; but when there are two deities, it is written, "Their heart is divided, now shall they be found wanting." A man of the world who is out and out in his conduct can make the best of his worldliness: what joy there is in it he gets, what profit there is to be made out of it he obtains; but if he tries to mix godliness with it he is pouring water on the fire, and hindering himself. On the other hand, if a man goes in for godliness, he will assuredly make something of it, by the blessing of God: if there be any joy, if there be any holiness, if there be any power, the man who is thorough-going wins it; but suppose he is pulled back by his love of sin, then he may possess enough religion to make him miserable, and enough of sin to prevent his salvation; but the two are opposed, and between them he finds no rest. The man is lame on both feet, impotent in both directions. He is like the salt which has lost its savour, neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but to be trodden under foot of men.

At first I should think that the mixture of the true with the false at Samaria looked like an improvement. I should not wonder but what the priests of Judah were rather glad to hear that the lions had come among the strangers, and that the people wanted to know something about Jehovah. It had a look in the right direction, and consequently the Scripture says that they feared God; but yet this fear of God was so hollow that, if you turn to the thirty-fourth verse, you will read, "They fear not the Lord." Sometimes a verbal contradiction most accurately states the truth. They feared the Lord only in a certain sense; but, inasmuch as they also served other gods, it came to this when summed up, that they did not fear God at all. The man who is religious and also immoral, to put it in short, is irreligious. He who makes a great fuss about godliness and yet acts in an ungodly way, when all comes to all, is an ungodly man. The value of this mixture is less than nothing. It is sin with a little varnish upon it. It is enmity to God with a brilliant colouring of formality: it is standing out against the Most High, and yet with a Judas kiss pretending to pay him homage.

These Samaritans in after years became the bitterest foes of God's people. Read the Book of Nehemiah, and you will see that the most bitter opponents of that godly man were those mongrels. Their fear of God was such that they wanted to join with the Jews in building the Temple, and when they found that the Jews would not have them, they became their fiercest foes. No people do so much hurt as those who are like Jack-o'-both-sides. The mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the Israelites, fell a-lusting. The mischief does not begin with the people of God, but with those who are with them, but not of them. The tares which you cannot root out grow with the wheat, and draw

away from it that which should have nourished it. As the clinging ivy will eat out the life of a tree around which it climbs, so will these impostors devour the church if they be left to their own devices. This patchwork religion is of more value to the devil than to anyone else; it is his favourite livery, and I pray you hate it, for it is a garment spotted by the flesh. I believe, dear friends, that those people who have a dread of God, which makes them appear religious, and who yet all the while live in their sins, are most in danger of any people in the world; for there is no getting at them to save them. You preach to sinners, and they say, "He does not mean us, for we are saints." You bring the thunders of the law to bear on the congregation, and they, being inside the church, are not afraid of the tempest. They hide behind their false profession. There is more likelihood of the salvation of a downright outsider than of these pretenders. They hold with the hare and run with the hounds, they fear the Lord and serve other gods, and they will perish in their folly. Their ruin will be all the more terrible because they sin in the light. They have so much conscience that they know what is right and what is wrong, and they deliberately choose to abide with the evil, even though at the same time they do despite to their better selves. Surely they will be banished to the deepest hell who seemed inclined to go towards heaven, but who, nevertheless, presumptuously wrenched off bolts and bars to force their way to destruction. O you religious worldings, for you there is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

How provoking this adulterated religion must be to God! It is even provoking to God's minister to be pestered with men whose hypocrisies weaken the force of his testimony. Here is a man who is known to be one of my hearers, and yet at the same time he drinks, and speaks lewdly, and acts wickedly. What have I to do with him? His tongue is never still, and he tells everybody that he is a friend of mine, and my great admirer, and then men lay his conduct at my door, and wonder what my doctrine must be. I could almost say, "Sir, be my enemy, for this will harm me less than your friendship." If this grieves his ministers, how provoking must it be to God himself: these people are seen to worship him, and when strangers come into the assembly they spy out these hypocrites, and straightway charge the holy Jesus with all their faults. "See," say they, "there is old So-and-so. He is a great man among them, and yet I saw him come out of the gin-palace more than three sheets in the wind." Thus the holy God is dishonoured by these unholy hypocrites. True religion suffers for their falsehood. One may fancy the Lord Jesus saying, "Come now, if you must needs serve the devil, do it; but do not loiter around my gates and boast of being my servants." The holy God must often feel his indignation burn against unholy men and women who intrude into his courts and dare to pass themselves off under his name. I put this very plainly. Some of you do not know how necessary it is to speak plainly in these days. If any of you perish through hypocrisy it shall not be because I did not speak boldly about it. May God the Holy Spirit of his great mercy apply the words where they need to be applied, that those who are fearing God and serving other gods may grieve over their inconsistency, and repent and turn in very deed and truth to the Most High.

IV. I pass briefly to another important point, which is this,—THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS EVIL : for the text says, "As did their fathers, so do they, unto this day." I believe in the final perseverance of the saints : I am almost obliged to believe in the final perseverance of hypocrites ; for, really, when a man once screws himself up to play the double, and both to fear God and serve other gods, he is very apt to stick there. It takes a great deal of effort to bring yourself to that degree of wickedness ; you must use a great deal of damping of conscience and quenching of the Spirit before you can reach that shameless point, and having once gained that position you are apt to keep it all your life long. "So do they unto this day."

Look, friends. It seems unlikely that a man would willingly continue in such a ridiculous position even for an hour. I call it ridiculous, for it is unreasonable and outrageous to be serving God and Satan at the same time. It is inconsistent and self-contradictory, and yet, though it be so, it is a sad fact that it is a deep pit and the abhorred of the Lord fall therein, seldom to be lifted out of it. Often by the grace of God we see the confirmed sinner plucked like a brand from the burning ; but, oh, how seldom do we see the hollow-hearted Pharisee brought out of his delusions. On the anvil of a false profession Satan hammers out the most hardened of hard hearts.

One reason why it can be said of most men—"so do they unto this day," is because it yields them a sort of comfort ; at any rate it keeps off the lions. "Why," say they, "it must be the right thing to do, for now we are quiet." While they lived in sin without a pretence of religion, when the minister preached the word powerfully, they went home trembling ; now they do not care what he preaches about : the lions roar no longer, not so much as a cub shows itself. Though they do drink a little, though they do use strong language now and then, though they are really unconverted, yet since they have taken a pew at the church, or the chapel, they feel wonderfully easy in their minds. This peace they think to be worth a Jew's eye. It is so soothing and pacifying to the conscience to feel that you mix up with the best of the saints, and are highly esteemed by them. So they wrap it up, and go down to hell with a lie in their right hand.

The worst of it is that not only men themselves do this, but their children and their children's children do the same : "As their fathers did, so do they unto this day." In an out-and-out godly family it is a great joy to see the children springing up to fear God ; but these double people, these borderers, see no such desirable succession. Frequently there is an open decline from apparent religion : the sons do not care to go where the old man went at all ; nor need we wonder, since it did him so little good. He made all unhappy at home, and none are eager to imitate him. In other cases, where there was kindness at home, the children are apt to try the same plan as their fathers, and mingle a little religion with a great deal of worldliness. They are just as keen and sharp as their worldly sire, and they see on which side their bread is buttered, and therefore they keep up the reputation of religion. A little gilt and paint go a long way, and so they lay it on. They fly the flag of Christ, at any rate, even though the vessel does not belong to his dominion, and is not bound for the port of glory. As vessels

sometimes run a blockade under a false flag, so do they reap many advantages from sailing under Christian colours. This detestable iniquity will not die out: it multiplies itself, scattering its own seed on all sides, and so from generation to generation it lives on; whole nations fear the Lord and serve other gods.

The greatest curse, perhaps, that ever visited the world came upon it in this way. Certain vain-glorious preachers desired to convert the world at a stroke, and to make converts without the work of the Spirit. They saw the people worshipping their gods, and they thought that if they could call these by the names of saints and martyrs the people would not mind the change, and so they would be converted. The idea was to Christianize heathenism. They virtually said to idolaters, "Now, good people, you may keep on with your worship, and yet you can be Christians at the same time. This image of the Queen of heaven at your door need not be moved. Light the lamp still; only call the image 'our Lady,' and 'the Blessed Virgin.' Here is another image; don't pull it down, but change its name from Jupiter to Peter." Thus with a mere change of names they perpetuated idolatry: they set up their altars in the groves, and upon every high hill, and the people were converted without knowing it—converted to a baser heathenism than their own. They wanted priests, and, lo, there they were, robed like those who served at the altars of Jove. The people saw the same altars and sniffed the same incense, kept the same holy days and observed the same carnivals as aforesaid, and called everything by Christian names. Hence came what is now called the Roman Catholic religion, which is simply fearing God and serving other gods. Every village has its own peculiar saint, and often its own particular black or white image of the Virgin, with miracles and wonders to sanctify the shrine. This evil wrought so universally that Christianity seemed in danger of extinction from the prevalence of idolatry, and it would have utterly expired had it not been of God, and had he not therefore once more put forth his hand and raised up reformers, who cried out, "There is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man." Brave voices called the church back to her allegiance and to the purity of her faith. As for any of you who are trying to link good and evil, truth and falsehood together, beware of the monstrous birth which will come of such an alliance: it will bring on you a curse from the Most High.

V. I shall now close by saying a few words by way of CURE OF THIS DREADFUL EVIL OF MONGRELISM; this fearing the Lord, and serving other gods. Suppose men were thus full of duplicity in politics, what would be thought of them? If a war should rage between two nations, what would be thought of the man who professed to serve the Queen, and all the while was playing his cards to win favour with the Queen's enemies. What would he be? A liberal-minded person? A gentleman of broad sympathies? Perhaps so. But also he would be a traitor, and when he was found out he would be shot. He who in any way tries to serve God and his enemies, is a traitor to God: that is what it comes to. In ordinary politics, if there be two parties, and a man comes forward and says, "I am on your side," and all the while he is doing his best to help the opposition, everybody says that he is a mean fellow. And what meanness it is to say, "I am for Christ," and yet practically

to be for his enemies ; to cry up holiness, and yet to live in sin ; to preach up faith in Christ, and yet to trust in your own merits. This wretched shuffling indicates a meanness of soul from which may God in infinite mercy deliver us. Suppose a man in business said, " Oh, yes, I will be an honest man, but I will at the same time practise a trick or two ; I will be as straight as a line, but yet I will be crooked too." Why, he would very soon be known by only one name, and that name a dishonourable one. A merchant cannot be honest and dishonest, a woman cannot be both chaste and unchaste, pure and impure, at the same time ; and a man cannot be truly with God and yet with the world ; the amalgamation is impossible. Everybody sees through such sham godliness.

Ah, my dear friends, suppose that God were to treat us after the like double fashion ; suppose he smiled to-day and cursed to-morrow ; suppose he said, " You fear me, and so I will give you comfort to-day ; but inasmuch as you worship other gods, when it comes to the last I will send you to your own gods ; you shall go down to hell." You want one course of conduct from God,—mercy, tenderness, gentleness, forgiveness ; but if you play fast and loose with him, what is this but mocking him ? Shall a man mock God ? O thou great Father of our spirits, if we poor prodigals return to thee, shall we come driving all the swine in front of us, and bringing all the harlots and citizens of the far country at our heels, and introduce ourselves to thee by saying, " Father, we have sinned, and have come home to be forgiven and to go on sinning " ? It were infernal,—I can say no less. Yet some attempt it. Shall any of us come to the blessed Christ upon the cross, and look up to his dear wounds, and say to him, " Redeemer, we come to thee ; thou shalt be our Saviour, thou shalt deliver us from the wrath to come ; but, behold, when we have washed our robes we will defile them again in the filth of the world. Wash us, and we will go back, like the sow, to wallow in the mire. Forgive us, and we will use the immunity which thy mercy grants us, as a further incentive to rebellion " ? I can imagine such language as that being used by Satan ; but methinks few of you have descended so low as to talk thus. Yet is not that exactly what the man says who professes to be a Christian, and yet wilfully lives in sin ?

Lastly, what shall I say of the Holy Spirit ? If he does not dwell in our hearts we are lost ; there is no hope for us unless he rules within us. And shall we dare to say—

" Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all thy quickening powers,"

meanwhile I will live in filthiness and selfishness. Come, Holy Spirit, come and dwell with me, and I will hate my brother, I will boil with angry temper, and will be black with malice, so as to make my home miserable. Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove, come dwell within my soul, and I will carry thee to the theatre, and the ball-room, and the house of evil name.

I hate to utter such language even for the sake of exposing it ; but what must God think of men who do not *say* so, but who *act* so ; who, like Balaam, live in sin and yet cry, " Let me die the death of the

righteous, and let my last end be like his." I dare not preach from that very popular text, for it is the mean, selfish wish of a man who even at the last would save his own skin. The old sneak! He wanted to live and serve the devil, and then cry off at the last. Surely he might have said, "I have been a prophet of Satan, and have sold my soul to him; let me die as I have lived." I would wish to live in such a way as I would wish to die. If I would not like to die as I am, then I ought not to live as I am. If I am in a condition in which I dare not meet my God, may God in mercy fetch me out of the condition at once. Let me be right, and let there be no mistake about it; but do not let me try to be both right and wrong, washed and filthy, white and black, a child of God and a child of Satan. God has separated heaven and hell by a gulf that never can be passed, and he has divided the two characters which shall people those two places by an equally wide gulf. This division can be passed by his grace, but none can inhabit the intermediate space. None can hang between spiritual death and spiritual life, so as to be partly in one and partly in the other. Decide, then, decide. Be one thing or the other. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Again I say with Elias, upon Carmel, "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." But do not mix the worship of the two, for thus you will provoke God, and cause his anger to burn like fire against you. May God bless this word, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Kings xvii. 24—41; Psalm lxii.

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WHOLE-HEARTED RELIGION.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 9TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them.”—Jeremiah xxxii. 39.

THOSE of you who were present last Lord's-day morning will remember my sermon upon “Mongrel Religion,” in which I dealt with those who feared the Lord and served other gods. Their heart was divided, therefore they were found faulty. They had, as the Hebrew puts it, a heart and a heart,—a heart that went this way and a heart that went the other way, and so as a matter of fact they became, as the prophet saith, as “a silly dove that hath no heart.” The discourse of this morning is intended to exhibit whole-hearted religion, which is the opposite of the sad mixture which we have so lately denounced. We wish to look upon persons of Caleb's stamp, who followed the Lord fully, in whom by the grace of God the divided heart has become united, so that with their whole heart they serve the Lord their God.

Our text is an extract from Jeremiah's copy of the covenant of grace. The Lord promises to Israel, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” And in the fortieth verse he says, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” This, then, is the covenant of grace which God has made with his people, and it is highly suggestive that the first blessing of it relates to the heart; for God when he begins with men does not begin with the outward way, but with the inward spirit. He puts it, “I will give them one heart and one way”: the way is second, the heart comes first. Understand, then, that in all true godliness we must begin with heart-work. It is no use hoping to polish the outside until by degrees you enlighten the interior; nay, but the light must first be placed within, and then, as it shines through, spots on the exterior will be discovered, and will all the more readily be cleansed away. God works not *to* the centre, but *in* the centre, and then from the centre into the outer life.

In reference to the heart, one of the earliest works of divine grace is to unite it in one. Strange to say, I should be equally truthful if I
No. 1,628.

said that one of the first works of grace is to break the heart ; but so paradoxical is man that when his heart is unbroken it is divided, and when his heart is broken, then, for the first time, it is united ; for a broken heart in every fragment of it mourns over sin, and cries out for mercy. Every shattered particle of a contrite spirit is united in one desire to be reconciled to God. There is no union of the heart with itself till it is broken for sin and from sin. Early in the morning of grace the man comes to himself, and so is restored to the unity of his manhood. The effect of this inner reunion is very salutary. We read of the prodigal, that "when he came to himself," he said, "I will arise and go to my father." The heart is united in itself when it is united to the Lord ; even as the Lord has said by the mouth of the prophet, "I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord : and they shall be my people, and I will be their God : for they shall return unto me with their whole heart."

It is of this unitedness of heart that I shall speak first, and then I shall go on to those other covenant blessings which come after it, according to the text. These are placed after it in order to show its great value, since it is the first step to exceedingly precious blessings.

First, then, we will consider *unitedness of heart* :—"I will give them one heart"; secondly, the blessing which immediately arises out of it, *consistency of walk*,—"I will give them one way." From these two come the third blessing, *steadfastness of principle*,—"that they may fear me for ever"; and consequent upon all this comes *personal blessedness*,—"for the good of them": and attendant upon that favour, *relative benediction*,—"and for the good of their children after them." Our programme is very extensive, may the Spirit of God help us to fill it up.

I. We begin, then, at the beginning, with UNITEDNESS OF THE HEART.

Our first statement under this head shall be that *it is naturally divided*. Sin is confusion, and at its entrance it created a Babel, or a confusion, within the heart of man. Until man sinned his nature was one and undivided ; but the fall broke him, and destroyed his unity. Within him now there are many voices, many imaginations, and many devices. Within him there is strife and contention, wars and fightings, which come of his lusts, which struggle with each other, and with his understanding. Observe the contest which is constantly visible between his conscience and his affections. His affections choose that which is evil, while his conscience approves that which is right. The desires go after that which appears to be pleasant, but the judgment warns the mind of its folly; hence a controversy between the two powers of the soul. The lusts crave for that which the intellect condemns ; the passions demand that which the reason would deny ; the will persists in that which the judgment would forego. The ship of our manhood will not obey the helm ; there is a mutiny on board, and those powers which should be underlings strive for the mastery. Man is dragged to and fro by contending forces : conscience draws this way, and the affections drag in the opposite direction. Our propensities and faculties are by nature like the crowd in the Ephesian theatre of whom we read, "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another ; for the assembly was confused." We sin not without some measure of compunction, and we do not quit our sin thoroughly even when we yield to conscience ; for the

heart still hankers after that which the conscience disallows. To many a man it is given to admire things that are excellent, and still to delight in things which are abominable. His conscience bids him rise to a pure and noble life, but his baser passions hold him down to that which is earthly and sensual.

Frequently, too, there is a very great division between a man's inward knowledge and his outward conduct. Men are often wise in the head and foolish in the hand: they know the right and do the wrong. The law of God is read in their hearing and written upon their memories, and yet it is forgotten in their lives. They are men of great discernment in theory, and yet in their actions they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; darkness for light and light for darkness. They sin against the light: "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Often and often the man is as right as justice herself in his opinions, and clear as the day in his information; and yet he gropes as the blind, and stumbles at noonday as in the night. His knowledge goes one way, and his will another; he knows the consequences of sin, and therefore fears; he perceives the pleasureableness or profit of sin, and therefore presumes. He is sure that he will never be so base as to fall into a certain fault; by-and-by he rushes into it, and defends himself for so doing, till he changes his fickle mind, and then he denounces that which just now he allowed. How can he be right with God when he is not even right with himself?

All through the carnal man, if you look at him, there is confusion and mischief. We should call that creature a monster which had its head towards the earth and its feet towards heaven, and yet the carnal man lives in that position; he ought to tread the world beneath his feet, but he places it above; while the heaven to which he should aspire he daily spurns! He lets his animal passions, which should be treated as the dogs of his flock, become his lords and masters. He reverses the order of nature, and bids the beast within him have dominion over the spirit. Appetites which in their way are good if they are kept in with bit and bridle are permitted to become evil, because they have unlimited indulgence and are allowed to be the tyrants of the soul. The Ishmael of the flesh mocks at the Isaac of the conscience, and is unreprieved. Solomon said, "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth," and the same may be seen in the little world within, where appetites rule and grander capacities are placed in servitude. Man is a puzzle, and none can put him together but he that made him at the first. He is a self-contradiction, a house divided against itself, a mystery of iniquity, a maze of folly, a mass of perversity, obstinacy, and contention. Sin has made the heart to be so inwardly divided as to be like the troubled sea which cannot rest; or like a cage of unclean birds, every one fighting its fellow; or like a den of wild beasts which cease not to rend each other. When man cast off the yoke of the One God he fell under bondage to gods many, and lords many, who struggle for supremacy and make the one kingdom into many rival principalities: since sin became natural to man, it became natural that man's heart should be divided.

But *it must be united*—there is the point; and hence the covenant promise, "I will give them one heart." For, dear friends, in the matters

of godliness if our heart be not whole and entire in following after God we cannot meet with *acceptance*. God never did and never will receive the homage of a divided heart. Alexander, when Darius proposed that the two great monarchs should divide the world, replied that there was only room for one sun in the heavens. What his ambition affirmed that God declareth from the necessity of the case. Since one God fills all things there is no room for another. It is not possible for a heart to be given up to falsehood and yet to be under the power of truth. It is idle to attempt to serve two such masters as holiness and iniquity. God cannot smile upon an unhallowed compromise, and allow men to bow in the house of Rimmon and yet worship in his holy temple. God will have all or nothing: he will have us only, wholly, altogether, and always his or else he will have nothing to do with us. False gods can bear a divided empire, but the true God cannot have it. You may assemble a parliament of idols, but Jehovah saith, "I am God alone." It was once proposed to the Roman senate to set up the image of Christ in the Pantheon among the gods, but when they were informed that he would not agree that any worship should be mingled with his own the senate straightway refused him a shrine. In this they acted in a manner consistent with itself; but those are altogether inexcusable "who swear by the Lord and swear by Malcham." We provoke the Lord to jealousy when we offer him a corner in our souls and allow our vain thoughts to lodge within us. Errors can lie down like sheep in a field, but no error can lie side by side with the lordly lion of the truth. There is no god but God. Jehovah, he is the God! There is one Mediator between God and man—the man Christ Jesus. Whatsoever a man setteth up in his heart as the object of his affections in opposition to God is a vain, a vile, a vicious thing, and that man cannot be accepted of the Lord. Wouldst thou, then, serve God, O man? Him only must thou serve. Wouldst thou bring unto him an offering? Thou must first give him thine heart—thine undivided heart. He cries, "My son, give me thine heart," and he saith not, "Give me a share of it." He will not call that house his temple where other things are worshipped as well as himself. Abhorrence, not acceptance, shall fall to the lot of that man who is half-hearted with God. And is not this as it should be? Does not the love of Jesus deserve our whole-hearted love in return? His love, which made him become man, deserves man's entire homage. His love which led him to the cross deserves that we be crucified to the world for his sake. His love to death demands that we be dead to sin for his sake. His love which now rules all heaven for our sakes deserves our soul, our life, our all. He gave himself for us, his whole self, and we must give our whole hearts to him. In the chapter before us the Lord says, "Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul." Shall we give half a heart to our whole-hearted God? Shall we be double-minded when he is so intense in blessing us? Shall we love the world and hope to have the love of the Father in us at the same time? God will not have it, and we do not wish it. The heart must be united.

We have seen that it must be united for acceptance, we now note that it must be united for *sincerity*: a divided heart is a false heart.

Where there is no unity of heart there is no truth in the spirit. Tell me that thou lovest the world, and I will tell thee that the love of the world is enmity to God. Declare that thou wilt serve Belial ever so little, and I know that thy service of Christ is but Judas' service—mercenary, temporary, traitorous. Sincerity does not open the front door to Christ and the back gate to the devil.

Our heart must be united, next, for *intensity of life*. True religion needs the soul to be ever at a fervent heat. "The kingdom of heaven," saith our Lord, "suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." None climb the hill whereon the New Jerusalem is built except such as go on hands and knees, and laying aside every weight give themselves wholly to the divine ascent. The pilgrim who hopes to reach the better land and makes a pleasure trip of it is under a mistake: it is hard travelling, and requires ardour and perseverance. It is so in every good word and work. A lazy prayer requests a denial, and shall have it. Half-hearted praise is an insult to God, and everything in religion that is not done with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, is a sin, however much it may look like a virtue. When we are most intense we do not come up to the zeal which these important things deserve: how can we then imagine that we can please God with less than our best? Know ye not that our Lord hath said, "Because thou art lukewarm, I will spue thee out of my mouth"? No stronger expression of disgust can possibly be used, and this disgust is not for the bold and hardened rebel, but for the moderate disciple who served God without fail, but without zeal. God loves a whole heart, but half a heart is his abhorrence. Only those who run with all their might will win the race; and, as the man of divided heart is lame on both his feet, he can have no hope of the prize. Lord, make my heart one, that I may give it all to thee, and spend and be spent in thy one service, since thou only art the One in whom my soul delighteth.

The heart must be united to be *consecrated*. Will God be served with broken cups and cracked flagons, and shall his altars be polluted with torn and mangled sacrifices? All the things in heaven and earth which the Lord acknowledges as consecrated things are dedicated to him and to him alone. Can you imagine that within the Holy Place there would be an altar part of which was used for sacrifices offered to Jehovah, and another portion for victims presented to Moloch? The idea cannot be endured. The Lord said of old to Ezekiel, "Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts." God will not account that to be consecrated to himself which is used by another. Brethren, we must be wholly consecrated unto the Lord, or we cannot be consecrated to him at all. We are unconsecrated, we are polluted, we are as things accursed if we are divided in heart.

Once more, we must have our heart united, or else *none of the blessings which are to follow in covenant order can possibly reach us*. For, look, "I will give them one heart," and then it follows; "one way";—no man will have a consistent, uniform way while he has a

divided heart. Read next, "That they shall fear me for ever"; but no man will fear God for ever unless fear has taken possession of his whole heart. The convert may profess to follow the Lord for awhile, but he will soon turn aside; he who does not begin with his whole heart will soon tire of the race. "For ever" is a long day, and requires our whole soul to hold on and to hold out. The Lord also promises that this shall be "for the good of them, and of their children after them"; but those who give God a part of their heart, neither win a blessing for themselves nor for their posterity; they are not among the seed that God has blessed, neither can they be. Oh men and women, if your hearts run hither and thither, and your aims and desires are scattered like a flock of sheep, running abroad according to their own wilfulness, the Good Shepherd will not feed you. When he comes to visit you he will gather all your desires and aspirations into one fold, and then will he lead you into green pastures, and make you to lie down therein. As under the old law men might not sow with mingled seed, nor wear garments of linen and woollen mixed, so neither can those of divided way and heart come into the favour of God.

So I leave the first head when I have noticed that according to the text *God will give his chosen this unified heart*: "I will give them one heart." Ah, we shall never obtain this blessing otherwise than as a free gift of God's grace. Teachers may put holy thoughts into our heads, but they cannot alter our hearts. We may unite our thoughts in some system of divinity, but we can never unite our desires upon the Divinity himself except we experience a work of grace upon our souls. The one Lord must make our heart one. He who once made the heart must make it anew to make it one. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." But none of these seven ones would ever be ours unless it were added, "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," and that grace must make our heart one. This the Lord does in part by enlightenment through the light of his Holy Spirit. He shows us the worthlessness and deceptiveness of everything that would attract our hearts away from Jesus and from our God; and when we see the evil of the rival, we give our heart entirely to him whom we worship. The Lord works this also by a process more thorough still; for he weans us from all idolatrous loves. He makes our carnal delights to become bitter to us, so that we turn aside from them with disgust, even as the Egyptians loathed to drink of the waters of the river which they formerly idolized, for the Lord had turned it into blood. He puts gall upon the breasts of the world, and then we look elsewhere for comfort. It takes much to make us cry with David, "My soul is even as a weaned child." Disease and death are summoned to shoot their fatal arrows at our dearest ones before we will give God the whole of our hearts. It is hard to love the creature much and yet not too much; it is a great thing to love our beloved ones in Christ and in subordination to Christ. Many a mother has had to lose child after child because she had stirred the jealousy of the best Beloved one by dividing her heart between him and her little ones. Many a man in business has fallen from wealth and prosperity because God saw

that his heart went astray after his possessions. Doubtless many have had eloquence, talent, and gifts of various kinds, and they doted upon these things until it has been needful to remove them to unite their hearts upon God, and so they have been laid aside by sickness, or the mind has lost its vigour, or the voice has failed, and the gift has become a plague rather than a comfort, and thus their heart has lost its idol, and has turned unto the Lord. If Christ is married to us he will have us chaste unto himself. What think we of a man who is engaged to a woman and is found spending his love upon another as well! We say he is false and treacherous, and we utterly despise him. He ought to give his heart to her whom he has espoused, and to love her with constancy, or he cannot be esteemed a pure minded man. Even so in our dealings with the Lord Jesus we must be watchful lest a single desire or affection should prove false to him. Such a glorious object of affection must fill the whole horizon of the soul, even as the sun fills all the heavens with his light, and the stars are quite forgotten. All the rivers run into the sea, and so must all our loves run to Jesus. Oh men and brethren, shut the gates of your hearts lest any steal away by night from the Lord. The heart must be whole and wholly his. Recollect that you may have a great gash in your head, and yet you may live; but if but a pin's point should divide your heart you will die. Ask grace to say with the psalmist, "O God my heart is fixed"; then, indeed, will you sing and give praise. This is not only important, it is essential. See ye, my hearers, whether you have received this choice blessing of the covenant of grace each one for himself,—this holy, uniting work of the Spirit of God.

II. If we have this we may now advance to the second blessing of the covenant here mentioned, which is **CONSISTENCY OF WALK**: "I will give them one way." When the heart is united the man lives for a single object, and that alone. Running in one direction, striving for one purpose, he keeps to the one way which leads to heaven. As Christ is our one life, so is he our one way.

Without this unity there can be *no truth* in a man's life. If he spins by day, and unravels at night, he is acting out a falsehood. If he runs to the right while men look at him, but trudges back again to the old post as soon as men's eyes are taken from him, his life is an equivocation, which is lie but a fine word for a lie. It is a dreadful thing for a man's word to be a lie, but for a man's whole life to be a lie is still more horrible. We may have much more of the liar about us than we dream of: let us see to it, and pray God that like Nathanael we may have no guile in us. We may patch up our life with bits of religion, and remnants of profession, till it becomes like the beggar's coat of which no man knows the original: such a garment may be fit for a beggar, but shall we wear it? The seamless garment of truth, woven from the top throughout adorns a Christian, but motley raiment proves a man a fool. Unless we follow the Lord with one heart, and one way, we shall be found to be liars after all; and if all liars have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, what will be his lot whose life was false to itself and false to God? Inconsistency of behaviour shows that truth is little set by in the heart.

We must, dear friends, have one walk, or else our life will make

no progress. He who travels in two opposite directions will find himself no forwarder. How is it that some professors are at much the same place as they occupied twenty years ago? Years have made them more grey, but not more gracious. At night they fastened up their boat in a little creek of the river, and when the tide ran out they waited and waited until close to the end of its running, and then they went down a little way with the tide; very soon the stream ceased to turn, and so they drifted back with the flood, and hitched up near the same muddy shore as before. Like a pendulum they travel far but get no farther. Growth, progress, advancement—none of these can they know, for they are double-minded, and so run to and fro in the earth and wear themselves out with vanity. Multitudes of people are doing this. They make such progress one Sunday that they resolve henceforth to live unto God. They begin at a steam engine rate, they plough the sea of life in their eagerness; they are like a vessel which has had new boilers put into her; but by to-morrow where are they? They have burst their boilers, or they have allowed the fires to go out, and henceforth they are without spiritual life or motion, and lie like logs upon the stream. This will not do; we must have one way of uniform vitality. I do not say that we can always make apparent progress at the same rate, for powerful under-currents affect our life, and a man may be doing much who is successfully overcoming adverse influences. When a fierce wind is blowing a captain may know that he will be driven on shore if he does not steam right into the teeth of the hurricane: if he does this is he not making the surest real progress if he manages to keep where he is and avoid the fatal danger? I say, then, that if we do not seem to advance we may, nevertheless, in the judgment of God be making true progress if we resist the mighty impulses which would otherwise hurry us on to destruction: but if we have two ways, and steer this way and that way and every way by turns, with the view of pleasing men and making things easy all round, we cannot speed towards the desired haven.

We must choose and keep to one way, or we cannot attain to *usefulness*. What influence has a double-minded man? If a man speak for God to-day, and so lives to-morrow that he virtually speaks for the devil, what power has he over those around him? How can he lead who has no way of his own? If your actions play fast and loose with truth; if your life is a chequer-work of black and white; if you are everything by turns and nothing long, what force for good can you possibly exert? Consistency and unity of life are necessary to usefulness.

And I am sure it is necessary for anything like *assurance*. The best of believers may through holy anxiety question their own state; but the man who has two ways may well sing:—

" 'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I his or am I not?"

O you who are inconsistent in life I must make bold to tell you that many of your friends are even more in doubt about you than you are about yourself. 'Tis a point we also long to know; for we cannot tell whether you love the Lord or no, whether you are his or not.

Sometimes we see happy signs about you, and our charity hopeth all things; but when we see you again falling into evil ways, we are distressed, and even our charity weeps over you. How can we be assured of your change of heart when we see so little change of life? What a pity to lead such a life that it puzzles those who love you best to form any judgment as to your condition. If you were to die as you are we should not know which way you would go, for your present path is dubious and intricate. Would you go to heaven or hell? Common judgment would depend upon whether you died in one of your good fits or in one of your bad ones. Is this a pleasant way of putting it? O ye who blow hot and cold, ye are strange beings, you seem to the common observer to be too good for hell, and not good enough for heaven. You cannot be divided at last, and therefore you may rest assured that the powers of evil will seize you as their own.

No person can come to any true personal assurance while his life is of a double character. But if I know that I have one heart, and that my heart belongs to my Lord, and that I have one way, a way of obedience to him, then may I be assured that I am his. If I cannot make such progress as I would, yet if I follow my Lord and keep my face steadfastly set towards Jerusalem, then I know where I am, and what I am, and whither I am going. Holiness of life proves our faith, and faith ensures our salvation, and salvation begets joy, and peace, and confidence. "Hereby we know that we know him if we keep his commandments." A plain way will make our condition plain. This unity of way is a covenant blessing: it comes not of man neither by man, but God gives it to his own elect as one of the choice favours of his grace,—“I will give them one heart and one way.”

III. Briefly we notice, in the third place, the next covenant blessing, STEADFASTNESS OF PRINCIPLE—“That they may fear me for ever.” Get the heart and the way right, and then the spiritual force of the fear of God will abide in us in all days to come.

Notice the basis of true religion,—it is the fear of God: it is not said that they shall join a church and make a profession, and speak holy words for ever; but that “They may *fear me* for ever.” Oh brothers and sisters, our religion must have the Lord in the very heart of it. We must be in constant contact with God, and possess in our souls the true fear of God; for as this is the beginning of wisdom so is it the only security of perseverance. When God has given us a true spiritual fear of him it will abide all tests. Outward religion depends upon the *excitement* which created it; but the fear of the Lord lives on when all around it is frost-bitten. What happens to many converts? The revivalists have gone, and they have gone too. But if God has given us one heart to love and obey him, and his fear is in us, we do not depend upon the mental thermometer. Like salamanders, we can live in the fire; but like seals we can live in Arctic ice. We are not dependent upon special services, and warm-hearted exhortations; for we have a springing well within. We live upon the Master, and not upon the servants: the Spirit of God does not leave us because certain good men have gone elsewhere. No, God has given us to fear him for ever.

Persecution comes, Christians are ridiculed in the workshop, they are pointed out in the street, and an opprobrious name is hooted at them;

now we shall know who are God's elect and who are not. *Persecution* acts as a winnowing fan, and those who are light as chaff are driven away by its blast ; but those who are true corn remain and are purified. Careless of man's esteem, the truly God-fearing man with one heart holds on his one way and fears the Lord for ever.

Then, perhaps, comes a more serious test, the trial of *prosperity*. A man grows rich, he rises into another class of society. If he is not a real Christian he will forsake the Lord, but if he be a true-born heir of the kingdom he will fear the Lord for ever, and consecrate his substance to him. A heart wholly given to God will stand the wear and tear of life in all conditions, whether in honour or in contempt. *Poverty* is a severe test to many, and I have known numbers of professors forsake the house of God because, as they said, their clothes were not fit to come in ; but that is a poor excuse ; I fear their hearts were not fit to come in. The fear of God would make the godly man swallow his pride and follow Christ in rags : he will bear a famine of bread and a famine of water, but he cannot endure a famine of the word of God. His soul must be fed, and so he must and will be found where the Lord's table is spread with the bread of heaven. When God stripped Job of all his riches, it was then that his integrity was seen and proved.

With some of you *old age* is creeping on ; but I rejoice to know that your grace is not decaying. You are becoming deaf, eyesight is failing you, and your limbs are trembling ; but you can still hear the voice of the Lord, and behold the beauties of his word, and run in the ways of his statutes. If God has given the young man one heart and one way, he will fear God for ever, and will not forsake the Lord when infirmities multiply upon him. He will bring forth fruit in old age, to show that the Lord is upright. If our soul is wholly Christ's, we can never go back unto perdition : " Who shall separate us from the love of God ? " The Lord has cast such cords of love about us that he holds us fast. We can lose father and mother, yea, and our own lives also, but we cannot forsake the Lord whose blood has bought us from the lowest hell. We are bound for the kingdom ; who shall keep us out of it ? We have been shot like arrows from the bow of God, and we must speed onward till we rest in the target of eternal bliss. Oh what a mercy it is to have within us a fear of God, which is not to last for a period of years, but *for ever !*

IV. Very hurriedly I mention the next thing, which is **PERSONAL BLESSEDNESS**, " for the good of them." Where God gives us one heart and one way, and steadfast principle, it must be for our good in the highest sense. Tell me who are the happiest Christians. They will be found to be whole-hearted Christians. When heart and life are divided happiness leaks through the crack. We must be steady in the pursuit of righteousness if we would abide in the enjoyment of peace. Brothers, if you want to know the sweetness of religion you must know the depth of it. The foam upon the top of the sacred cup is often bitter, but at the bottom lies the essence of sweetness. I will not say, drink deep or drink not at all, but I will say this, that those who are content with superficial godliness have no idea of the delights which dwell in the deep places of communion with God. Plunge into the river of life ; let body, soul, and spirit be immersed into its floods, and you shall

swim in joy unspeakable. Lose sight of the shores of worldliness and you shall see God's wonders in the deeps. In intense devotion to the Lord you will find the rare jewel satisfaction. "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord!" Sweet content never dwells with half-heartedness.

This shall be for your good every way—for your guidance in business, for your direction in devotion, for the good of your mind here, for the good of your spirit hereafter. To be endowed by grace with one heart and one way is to be rendered fit to live and fit to die. I am sure if you read the biographies of men, if they are fairly written, you will find that the good, the true, the great, the noble, were single-minded. Those who have the clearest sight of God are the pure in heart and the undivided in heart; and those who enjoy a heaven below are those whose hearts and lives are engrossed with heavenly things. The blessed life is that of fervent love and thorough consecration. Do these things abound among you, brethren? I believe that in this assembly there are more whole-hearted Christian men than I am likely to meet with in any other gathering: and yet, for all that, I cannot help fearing that even here there are professing Christians who never knew what it was to give their hearts perfectly to God's work, or to the love of Jesus. When these people come to the hour of trouble they are dispirited and rebellious; would it be so if they were perfectly resigned to God's will? These people are often short of spiritual comforts; would they be short of them if they had made a clean and clear surrender to their God? I believe they would not. Men who will not eat are starved and weak, and many a disease finds soil within them through the weakness of their constitution; but those who feed on Christ, the Bread of Heaven, are nourished and strong, and are preserved from a thousand ills by that very fact. O God the Holy Spirit, I cannot talk to Christ's servants as I wish to do, but thou canst move them now to aspire after a complete giving up of themselves to thee, for this shall be for their good!

V. The last is a RELATIVE BLESSING: "And for their children after them." Whole-hearted Christians are usually blessed with a posterity of a like kind. Consecrated men and women live to see their children following in their steps. When sons and daughters forsake the ways of godliness do you wonder when you spy out the home life of their parents? If religion is a sham, do you expect frank young men to respect it? If the father was hollow-hearted in his profession, will not the children despise it? The genuine, thoroughbred Christian is often hated, but he is never the object of contempt. Men may ridicule him, and say that he is a fool, but they cannot help admitting that he is happy, and the wiser sort among them wish that they were such fools themselves. Be thorough and true, and your family will respect your faith. The almost inevitable consequence of respect in a child towards his parent is a desire to imitate him. It is not always so, but as a rule it is so: if the parents live unto God in a thorough-hearted way, their sons and daughters aspire to the same thing. They see the beauty of religion at home around the fireside, and their conscience being quickened they are led to pray to God that they may have the like piety, so that when they themselves commence a household they may enjoy the like

happiness. Certainly if any of you are the children of eminently godly parents, and are living in sin, your parents' lives condemn you. Are they in heaven? Dare you go to their grave, and sit upon the grassy hillock, and think of how you are living? It will force tears to your eyes to contrast yourself with them. You may well tremble to think that you neglect your mother's Saviour, that you forget your father's God. It will go hard with those who leap into hell-fire over a father's prayers and a mother's entreaties; yet some seem desperately resolved on such suicide. I hope these are comparatively few, and that still it is true, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Blessings temporal and spiritual come upon households where the heads of the family are completely consecrated to God. Try it! try it! I will be bound that you will find it profitable. If at the last great day you shall find that consecration to Christ is an error, I will be willing to bear the blame for ever. I am not afraid that any one among you will ever censure me for having excited you into a zeal too fervent, or a life too devoted. Brothers, I am afraid of those of you who go ankle deep into religion and never venture further; I am afraid lest you should by-and-by return to the shore; but as for you who plunge into the centre of the stream, and find waters to swim in, I have no fears; you shall be borne onward by a current ever increasing in strength till in the ocean of eternal love you lose yourselves in heaven above. I can wish you no greater blessing than that the Holy Spirit may make you whole-hearted, consistent, persistent, ardent, established, and persevering in the things of God. On you and on your household my heart pronounces this benediction,—the Lord give you one heart and one way that you may fear him for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxxvi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45 (Vers. I.),
116 (Song II.), 654.

In the first week of the year 1882 we propose to hold a Bazaar, in order to complete the Girls' Orphanage at Stockwell. Mr. Spurgeon will be greatly obliged if all his friends will help. By a combined effort from sermon-readers this work might be finished out of hand. Goods should be directed to the Orphanage, Stockwell, and moneys to C. H. Spurgeon, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WELCOME! WELCOME!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing."-- Luke ix. 11.

MY subject has been suggested to me by the rendering of this passage given in the Revised Version, where we read: "But the multitudes perceiving it, followed him; *and he welcomed them.*" The difference lies, you see, between the words "he received them" and "he welcomed them." The new version is an instructive improvement, of which we will at once make evangelical use.

The multitude perceived that Jesus was departing, and began to value his presence all the more, because they feared the loss of it. They could not tell where he might go, nor for how long, and they could not afford to part with him: therefore no sooner did they see the boat leave with him, than, watching the direction in which it was steered, they hastened along the shore to overtake him at his landing. They were not content to walk, but they ran afoot, and as they darted through the first village the people enquired the reason of this rush: they were informed that the great prophet was crossing the sea to the other shore; they joined in the pursuit, and the running company was increased. When they reached the next town there was quite a stir, as the citizens heard the crowd tramping through the gate and along the streets; and again the enquiry was heard, "What means this eager, anxious throng?" Again the crowd increased, and on they went hurrying as hard as they could go, till they actually reached the shore before the vessel which carried Jesus. As for the Master, though he had taken ship on purpose to be quiet and alone, he exhibited no signs of anger at their intrusion: he did not rebuke them as though they were rude and troublesome; but we are told that "he welcomed them." Had he been like ourselves, he would have regarded them as most unwelcome; but in the graciousness of his heart he did not think them so; but honestly and heartily welcomed them. Now, if our Lord welcomed people at that inconvenient time, we might safely infer that he will welcome them at all times; but we are not left to draw inferences; for we find all through his life that he always received sinners, and never rejected any one. Our Lord kept open house as long as he was here. It might always have been said of him, "This man receiveth and welcometh sinners." His motto was,
No. 1,624.

"Whosoever will, let him come." If any desired to come nearer than being mere hearers, and would join the band of disciples, he was always ready to receive them. If many did not enter into the closest intimacy of his heart it was because they were themselves unable to come, and not because he shut them out. Publicans and sinners drew near unto him; the very look of him was an invitation, his finger beckoned, his eye persuaded, his outstretched arms entreated, his whole self attracted all men unto him. At the door of his love there lay no growling dog of morose suspicion, neither had he placed there the porter of stern rebuke, but the door was set wide open, and over the portal was written the words, "COME AND WELCOME." That is the subject of this morning's discourse, my earnest desire being that some who have been afraid to approach him may be induced to come at once by learning how freely he welcomes all comers.

First, we shall dwell upon *the fact* that Jesus welcomes all who come to him; secondly, we shall use it as *an encouragement* to all seeking souls; and, thirdly, we shall employ it as *a lesson*, teaching those of us who are his disciples how to treat those who desire to see Jesus.

I. First, may the Holy Spirit help us while we dwell upon **THE FACT** that Jesus welcomed those who sought him.

We observe, first, that *our Lord received all comers at all times*. The time mentioned in our text was the most inconvenient possible. He was seeking rest for his disciples, who had gone through the various towns and villages preaching and working miracles; they were a good deal elated at their success, and it was needful that they should have a little quiet retirement to think matters over, and to come down into a calm state of mind. Moreover, they were weary: for they were so thronged by the people that they had not time even for needful refreshment, and rest was, therefore, absolutely requisite, lest these few men, who were in fact the hope of the church and of the world, should die of exhaustion. The Master put them into a ship that they might sail away and find retirement in a desert place. Rest was absolutely needful to the overwrought workers. A great sorrow was on them also, for John had been beheaded, and it was meet that they should solace their grief by a short retirement. At this time, too, our blessed Lord desired obscurity; for Herod was enquiring for him; and even when that delightful king was in his best mood he was not one whose near acquaintance anyone would wish to cultivate. He might, perhaps, have listened to Jesus as he listened to John; but he would have sought his life as soon as he had gratified his curiosity, or another Herodias would have goaded him on to murder the faithful preacher who made the palace too hot for the wanton. Our Lord's time was not yet come, either to be exhibited in a royal court, or to be slain as a royal victim; and therefore he sought a desert place for a little while. It was most inconvenient, therefore, to be followed by so great a crowd. Were the workers to have no rest? Could there be no retirement afforded, especially at a time when it was so necessary? Is it not wonderful that under such circumstances our blessed Lord should *welcome* the insatiable throng?

I think, too, that the Master desired just then to hold a conference with his apostles as to the work they had done, and the future which

was opening up before them. Peradventure he willed to set apart a season for special prayer with them. Before any great effort, we read that he retired to pray, and so, depend upon it, after any great enterprise he would again seek private prayer. It would naturally occur to him to rake in the good seed which the twelve had so successfully scattered. But peace and rest he must not have, for the multitudes are on the beach before he can set foot thereon. The apostolic conference was broken in upon, and turned into a great camp-meeting. The Master and his disciples are not allowed to get alone even to hold high and solemn discourse upon the affairs of his kingdom; but here come the crowds, pell-mell, crushing one upon another, and the Master and his little band find themselves the centre of a great mass of people. Rest, or quiet, or holy discourse are out of the question; preaching, healing, and feeding must fill up every moment till the day is far spent. Our Lord welcomed the throng with a gracious air; full of tenderness, he smiled upon them as a captain smiles upon his soldiers at the muster. He did not lose his patience with them, nor chide them for their ill-manners; but just as if he had asked them to come, and had sent forth his heralds to summon them, he stood ready to receive them. It is wonderful that he did not say, "Go your way for this time: when I have a more convenient season I will send for you." I have heard those words somewhere, but they were not used by our Lord: they were used by one at the door of whose conscience the gracious Lord had been knocking. If there are any put-offs, they are not on Christ's side, but on ours. Oh sad, that ever men should ask for delay when Jesus even at the most inconvenient season is ready to welcome them.

Let me put the truth before some of you here who as yet are unsaved. Come to Jesus when you will, it shall always be at the right time. Times consecrated to other purposes shall yet afford you welcome. The saints of God gather at the communion table, and the spreading of that table is not intended to be a means of grace to the unconverted: on the contrary, it is fenced and guarded, and reserved for believers only, and none have any right there but those who are in Christ. The object of the Lord's supper is not conversion, but edification: it is intended that as many as are alive unto God should there be fed, that those emblems should remind them of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are the food of their spiritual life. Yet if any of you should be looking on—ay, and even if you should have intruded there without a right to come, yet if you seek the Saviour he will not be so occupied with the fellowship of saints as to refuse a sinner. His heart will not be so taken up with the near, and dear, and choice love of his own favoured ones as to shut his ear to the cry of the humble and contrite. If thou seek him, even when thou art intruding, he will be found of thee.

Peradventure, also, I address some who have outlived revivals. You remember precious seasons when the power of God was present to heal men, and many were to your knowledge healed. You sat side by side with some who sought and found salvation in Christ: you did not seek, and you did not find; or if, perhaps, you exhibited some emotion, yet your search after Christ was very faint and dilatory, and consequently you did not meet with him to the joy and peace of your spirit.

Now that the revival is over, and the flood-tide of grace seems to have ebbed out, you have come, like the dying year, to a time when the harvest is past and the summer is ended, and you are not saved. Around you blow the fallen leaves, and you yourself do fade as a leaf, but you are not saved. Opportunities of blessing have been plentiful with you, but you are not saved. You are now at the close of the day, and your sun is going down, but you are not saved. Even yet there is hope, for our Lord's welcome is a long and lasting one. If you be drawn by invisible cords to seek the Saviour, yield to those gentle drawings, for Jesus receives men even down to the shutting of the gate. It may be late, but it is not too late. You may go to Christ at midnight as well as at mid-day, and never will he answer that the door is now shut, so that he cannot rise and give you. Even though the special means of grace may have ended, and the men whom God has blessed have gone elsewhere, yet still come, and welcome, to Jesus Christ; for there never was an hour discovered yet in which Jesus would refuse a sinner that longed for him. Have you never read that text, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"? There is no reserve as to the dead hours of night, or the raw hours of the morning. If a soul will but come to Christ, the Lord will never say him nay.

It may be, dear friend, that you think the present would be a very improper time to come to Christ, because you have so lately been plunging into a fearful sin. You say, "Would you have me go black-handed to Christ, black-hearted to Christ?" Yes, I would have you fly to him at once, even as the manslayer darted off to the city of refuge, with the blood of the slain still warm upon his hand. Do you put it to me as a question suggested by a sort of moral decency—Must I not let an interval pass over me in which I may in a measure wash out the recollection of my present sin? No! I tell thee, no. I rather dread than desire such a false washing as the mere lapse of time can give. Time cannot alter wrong, or make sin less heinous; and if it pacifies the conscience it is an evil peace, a false peace, a peace to be abhorred. Come to Jesus while yet the wounds of thy conscience are bleeding. Come while they are at their worst, neither washed, bound, nor mollified with ointment. When thou art foul is the fittest time for washing; and when thou art altogether undone, and conscious of it, then is the season to hasten away to the great Saviour. When Saul of Tarsus was about to hunt the saints of God, he saw Damascus lying in the plain below, and he himself was ready like a fierce tiger to spring upon it; but there and then Jesus appeared to him, Might he not have said in answer to the voice from heaven, "My Lord, let me go back to Jerusalem and endure a quarantine: let me hide away for months, and then come to thee"? No; but then and there was he converted, though smitten down in the act of persecution. Nothing could seem to be more inconvenient than for Christ to receive him there and then, with the writs upon him for the arrest of the saints; yet the Lord welcomed the persecutor, and he will welcome others in like case. My hearer, I will not try to describe your sin of last night, nor will I make a guess at what you propose to do in sin before to-morrow's sun has risen; but I will beseech you, as you are, to arise and seek

the Saviour. Poor prodigal brother, quit the husks and the swine-trough; quit them now, and without so much as tarrying to wash your hands, go home to your Father, who will wash you and make you white as snow. Tarry for nothing. Delay is your greatest danger. This very moment is the fittest for repentance and faith. Come now; for the Lord waiteth to be gracious. I do not find that when the prodigal reached his father's house he came there at an unseemly hour. I never knew whether it was the middle of the night, the early morning, or the middle of the day, for the parable does not give us a hint. At any rate, it was at such an hour that the fatted calf was waiting to be killed, a ring and the best robe were ready to be brought forth, and all in the house were ready to keep holiday over him that was lost and found. Sinner, hie away, hie away to Jesus, be the hour whatsoever it may. Our gracious Lord cannot repel you, for even those were welcomed who came at the most inconvenient hour which can be imagined, and since then he has refused none.

The same truth will now be set in another light by a second remark. *Our Lord received all sorts of comers.* They were a motley throng, and I fear that few, if any, of them were actuated by any high or exalted motive. No doubt some came to hear, and others came to see, but many came for what they could get. They followed after Jesus because they were sick, and he could heal them. "Ah me!" I have heard it said by awakened ones, "I am afraid, if I came to Christ, I should come from a selfish motive." Dismiss that fear, which at bottom is self-righteous: what should a beggar come to your house for but to seek an alms? To gain something is the only motive with which a poor sinner can come to Christ. Our fear of hell, or dread of sin, or hope of pardon, must drive or draw us to Christ; in any case, our motive must be to receive at his hands. I confess that I at first came to Christ only and solely for what I could get out of him. It was an apostle who said, "We love him because he first loved us." I have heard of a love of Jesus which is purely disinterested, and I believe it is possible, and that it may grow up in after Christian life; but at the first we must come to Jesus with an eye to what we shall obtain at his hands; we must come because we cannot do without him. There is no other way of coming. "It is a low motive," says one. So it may be, but it is a powerful motive for all that. At any rate, Christ exhorts us to come unto him for rest and for salvation, and I do not remember a single exhortation to this ideal, disinterested love. The Lord Jesus welcomed the multitudes though they came from low motives, and so will he welcome us if we do but come to him. If what we come for is something for ourselves, if we come to him that sin may be forgiven, and that we may be made the children of God, our motives will not be disgusting to Christ; but he will welcome us.

Among those who came to Christ there must have been all sorts of people; but the bulk of them had hurried to him hastily and *unprepared*. They came afoot, it is said, running. They had not had time to prepare themselves with any kind of decent apparel. As they ran scampering through the villages, each one gathered others at his heels, and they came helter-skelter, a most promiscuous throng. They were not dressed for solemn worship; but there they were, and the

Saviour welcomed them. I wonder how long a man would need to spend in preparing himself for coming to Christ. When he had done it all, what would it be worth? Preparation for coming to Christ is simply this:—If you are empty you are prepared to be filled; if you are sick you are prepared to be healed; if you are sinful you are prepared to be forgiven; but all other preparation is quite out of the question. We must not supersede the gospel by the law, and we should be doing so if we told the sinner to make himself fit for mercy. O weary, heavy laden souls, you may come just as you are: hot from the fleshpots of Egypt, grimy from Pharaoh's iron furnace you may come and sit down and eat the paschal lamb, and though every rag about you be defiled, yet just as you are you may come to the fountain filled by Jesus Christ himself, and wash and be clean. They were a most unprepared lot of people; but Jesus welcomed them.

Most of them might have been objected to by our Lord if he had chosen to do so, for various reasons,—the most of them on account of their *poverty*. They had not even a crust among them. They had come away in such a hurry that they had not brought a day's food with them, and if they came to Christ they must be fed by him within a few hours, or else drop from sheer starvation. They were a ragged regiment, a hungry herd—what some fine folks call the mob, the canaille; but Jesus welcomed them, and never said a syllable about their bare backs and empty pockets. How squeamish some of his servants are; but their Master had no such proud ways about him. I heard one say the other day that he could not attend a place of worship because he had not clothes that were fit to come in. I wonder what sort of garments the Lord Jesus would object to in a coming sinner! I am afraid if he were to see some of you he would hardly think that you are dressed fit for public worship, for you are too smart by half; but I do not believe that he ever rejected a man or woman because of their patched or unfashionable garments. What cared he for court dress, and full dress, and all that nonsense? Our Lord was no flatterer of wealthy lords and handsome ladies. No robe or mantle ever charmed his eye. I never read in Scripture that Jesus said, "Come not between the wind and my nobility, ye unwashed crowds." Never did he turn away because they were beneath him in condition, and too poor for his notice. Nothing of the sort. It was the jewel of his ministry that "the poor had the gospel preached unto them." He delighted to see the needy gather about him to be taught and comforted. So, then, none of you can plead poverty. If you have not a penny to bless yourselves with, Christ will bless you without money and without price.

Many of the multitude might have been rejected on account of *disease*, for into the crowd the lepers came—disagreeable neighbours anywhere. They certainly had no right to mingle with healthy people, but they did so, for they had hopes of being healed. Men and women were there who laboured under defiling disorders, for which, according to the Jewish law, they ought to have been shut up in a separate house; yet when the crowd came to Christ these poor souls came in among the rest, and there is no instance of the Lord's ever sorting them out and saying to any one, "I cannot receive you, for you are a leper." What a melancholy sight the Master must have seen when he went out into the streets

and they there laid the sick in their beds. He always walked in the midst of a great hospital, among the most horrible diseases, yet never once did he turn any case away. O poor souls, sick souls, come to Jesus at once, for my blessed Master will welcome you all, whoever you may be.

Neither did our Lord ever reject one person on account of *youth*. His disciples thought that such a preacher as he was ought never to be listened to except by persons of intellect, or at least of ripe years, who could appreciate what he would say; and when the mothers brought the children the disciples were much displeased with them; but our Master welcomed the young, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Dear boys and girls, Jesus will not put you by to wait till you are older, but he will welcome you just as you are. Ah, how sweetly Jesus is doing this to my knowledge with many little folks. I heard last week of a poor boy who lived near my house. A meeting is held by some of our friends in a cottage, and this boy came one night and said, "Please, sir, may I come in?" The good man of the house answered, "You may if you will wash your face and hands." "That I will do, sir," he said; and he soon returned and took his seat. He was an attentive hearer and a devout worshipper. Though only twelve years old he loved the prayer-meeting, and was always there. One evening he said to the leader of the meeting, "Please, sir, may I pray?" and this poor child then poured out his heart before God with such sweetness that he impressed all who listened to him. One night as he went out of the room he shook hands with the good man of the house and said, "Good-bye, sir, perhaps we may not meet again till we meet in heaven." His words seem prophetic now, for before the next meeting a brewer's dray passed over him, and his sweet young spirit ascended to Jesus whom he loved so well. What a joy to know that this poor child is now beholding the face of our Father who is in heaven. I am right glad to say that we are continually receiving boys and girls into the church. Child-piety is no rarity among us; we find it no cause of difficulty, but a well-spring of delight. Dear children, do not be afraid to come because you are so little, for Jesus has told the big people that except they receive him as little children they shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. He said also, "They that seek me early shall find me." Come to him at once.

There were some in the throng, too, whom Jesus might have rejected because they were *too old*. Here they come! They can scarcely see their way; they limp, they use crutches, they are deaf, and their limbs are very feeble. Surely, when these poor old souls come to Jesus, he might say to them, "What am I to do with you worn-out old creatures? Go and spend the rest of your days where you spent the first part of them! How dare you think of coming to me when you are baldheaded, feeble, lame, and blind? How can you be soldiers of the cross?" Glory be to his name, our great Captain enlists old men, makes friends with old women, and delights to magnify the greatness of his grace in the salvation of the most infirm. Father William, though it be the eleventh hour with you, our Lord still calls you into his vineyard. Come, and fear not.

“Well,” say you, “I can understand his receiving both young and old; but surely *sin* must have led him to refuse a comer.” It was not so. Those who came to Christ were often very sinful; but he received sinners. Did you ever notice that the last person he spoke to before he died was the thief on the cross, and the first person he spoke to when he rose again was Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils? My Lord delights to draw near to the guiltiest of the guilty, to blot out their iniquities, and to receive them into his heart of love; so that I come back to what I said before: our Lord receives all sorts of comers.

Once more: *our Lord receives all with a hearty welcome.* He did not merely allow the people to come near, tolerating their presence; but “he welcomed them.” When he saw that they were like sheep without a shepherd his heart was stirred within him, and he at once laid himself out to do them good. The sight of their need aroused his compassion: the deep fountains of his infinite love were broken up at once, and flooded his whole nature, so that “he was moved with compassion.” He proved that he welcomed them by the deeds that he wrought for them. He taught them concerning the kingdom; he healed those that had need of healing; and he fed the whole five thousand. There was not one single exception to this rule, he welcomed every one of them—taught, healed, fed, and smiled on all. He did not single out one, and say, “You, sir, may go your way, I will have nothing to do with you”; but each one felt that he was welcome. It is just so now. My blessed Master is glad to receive sinners, his bowels yearn over men; he longs for their salvation; he rejoices when they come to him; he proves his willingness to receive them by the bounty of his grace towards them; he multiplies his benedictions towards those that trust him; he heaps on his favours; he does all that they want, and grants them exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or even think, and this without a single exception on any ground, or for any reason whatever; for, “Him that cometh to me,” saith he, “I will in no wise cast out.” This is the blessed fact.

II. Now I come to use this as AN ENCOURAGEMENT. If Jesus Christ when he was here on earth welcomed all that came at all hours, then he will welcome you, my friend, if you come to him now; for the circumstances are just the same. You are *the same sort of person* as those whom Jesus used to welcome. They were good-for-nothing bodies; they were persons that were full of need, and could not possibly bring a price with which to purchase his favour. Are you not just like them? Are you a very special sinner? I am sure I could find another special sinner like you whom Jesus has received. I will not go into detail; but I will venture to ask you—Are you a thief?

The dying thief rejoiced to see
In Christ salvation full and free.

Have you been unchaste? David was an adulterer and was pardoned; and Jesus forgave a woman that was a sinner, who therefore loved him much. The untruthful, the unclean, the ungodly are the sort of people that Jesus came to seek and save.

And then there is *the same Saviour.* Jesus Christ is the same

gracious Pardoner as he was in the days of his flesh. "Why," say you, "he is in heaven." Yes, but I never knew anybody lose anything by going to heaven: it is all the other way. Jesus has not lost his tenderness nor his compassion, nor his delight in blessing the sons of men. He is the same Saviour in glory that he was in his humiliation. I invite you to come, dear friend, though you are suffering from the same unfitness as these people were. Come just as you are, and come with the same expectation as they did; for they expected him to work wonders for them, and he did so. Jesus is in the same mind as when he would not condemn the guilty woman, and when he prayed for his his murderers: he is still bent upon the one errand of saving men: he still welcomes sinners. Since, then, you are under the same conditions, come, and *expect the same result* from your coming.

The welcome that you will receive from Christ, my dear friend, will be as hearty as that which they received. When is it that a man does not make all comers welcome? It may be a person calls for whom he has no liking, and he does not invite him to a meal because he does not want him; he would sooner have his room than his company; but that is not true of our Lord; for he loves his enemies, and seeks his foes. He has abundant love to guilty men, and hears their cry for mercy. So glad is our Lord to see the marriage feast of his love furnished with guests, that he sends out his servants to fetch in highwaymen and vagrants. Sometimes people are not welcome because they come when you have not enough to feed them with. The good housewife murmurs, "I wish they had come some other day." It is never so with our Master. He has abundant provision; yet there is room, ay, and yet there is food. There is enough in Christ Jesus for all that ever will come to him for salvation. All that the Father giveth him shall come, and there is not one that shall come whom he will send away because there is not due provision made for him. That reason cannot possibly exist when Jesus himself in all his fulness is the covenant provision. Sometimes a host may not welcome an applicant because it would be dangerous to his reputation to entertain him. We should none of us be eager to entertain a thief or a burglar or a murderer in hiding from justice, nor would vagabonds and tramps be our chosen guests, for it would lower our esteem among men. As for our Lord Jesus, his reputation is gone long ago: "He made himself of no reputation," that he might welcome the disreputable to his house and heart. They sneeringly spread it about the streets, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Yes, his reputation was gone among the Pharisees; but he has a new reputation now, and his great glory is that he cleanses the chief of sinners, and makes them heirs of God. O my trembling hearer, you need not be afraid.

Sometimes a man who has been hospitable has been known to grow weary of it; for he says, "These people come and eat and drink, and then abuse me." Jesus has never been hardened by this; his house is open, and his table is furnished still. He foreknew our ill manners, and he has not been surprised by the conduct of any of his guests. He knew they were unworthy; he did not entertain one of them because they deserved it; he did it all because he is infinitely gracious, and delights to do good to the unthankful and to the evil. This is why

he keeps his house open still, that those who are ready to perish may come, that the worthless and undeserving may come and participate in the bounties of his grace. Jesus Christ will make you welcome, though society will not own you. Is there any man here that doubts it? My friend, come and try the Lord. There is not on earth a man that dares to say, "I went to Christ, and he cast me away." You may perambulate hell itself, and never find one who can truthfully say, "I believed in Jesus, and he would not save me." Come, friend, if he rejects you, you will be the first of his castaways. We will have you up in the Tabernacle and exhibit you as the man that Jesus Christ would not save, and then I will shut up shop, and hold my tongue for ever. I will never dare to preach the gospel again if one come to Jesus be rejected by him. It never has happened, and never shall. Come and welcome. Jesus welcomed the crowd, and he will welcome you, and he will prove that you are welcome by doing for you what he did for them. He will teach you, teach you concerning the kingdom, teach you repentance, teach you faith; he will teach you so effectually that you shall learn truly, and your heart beneath his teaching shall be changed and sanctified, and you shall become a new creature. More than that, he will heal you. Whatever the disease of your soul may be, only come to my Master and he will banish every plague of doubt, or palsy of fear, or leprosy of sin, or fever of lust. There is no balm in Gilead; but Jesus Christ is the never-failing Physician, and he can make you whole at once. Nor is this all, for he will feed you with the bread of heaven; with better than angels' meat will he sustain you, and satisfy your heart and mind with all that you can desire.

Thus I have laboured to encourage you. O that the Spirit of God may give effect to my words.

III. Thirdly, we use our text as A LESSON. Dear friends, if Jesus Christ welcomes all that come to him, let all of us who are his followers imitate his example, and give a warm welcome to those who seek the Lord. Whatever their motive is, whenever we see people coming to the worship of God, and especially when we see them a little impressed, let us welcome them heartily. It is a grievous sin when strangers come in and find themselves stared at as if they were wild beasts; nobody offers them a seat: they may stand till they drop, but nobody cares an atom about them, and they may come again, and go in and out for the month together, and never a word is spoken to them. I pray you, do not so; but, on the contrary, look out personally for individuals, and try to win them for Jesus. There has been a great wind lately, and it has shaken down much fruit; but windfall fruit is seldom good for much. Billy Bray used to say, "The best fruit is hand-picked," and I believe the best converts in the world are those for whom loving hearts wait, and pray, and plead. Sometimes after a great sermon, or when there has been a mighty shaking under a revival, many come down who are only windfalls and of very small account; but those whom you win one by one, by caring about them, minding their estate, and watching their growth—these are the best of fruit and well worth storing. Mind, then, this rule: when you go gathering fruit go with a smile. Men are brought to Jesus by cheerfulness far sooner than by gloom. Jesus welcomed men;

his looks said, "I am glad to see you." He seemed to say to the people who flocked after him into his retirement, "I did not invite you at this time, for I desired to be alone; but as you are so earnest and eager after me, I am prepared to do what you desire. You are welcome to all that I can do for you." In winning souls use an abundance of smiles. Have you not seen in one of our magazines an account of seven people saved by a smile? It is a pretty story. A clergyman passes by a window on his way to church. A baby was being dandled there, and he smiled at the baby, and the baby at him. Another time he passed; the baby was there again, and once more he smiled. Soon baby was taken to the window at the hour when he usually passed. They did not know who the gentleman was; but one day two of the older children followed to see where he went on a Sunday. They followed him to church, and as he preached in a winning way, they told their father and mother, who felt interest enough in their baby's friend to wish to go. Thus in a short time a godless family that had previously neglected the worship of God was brought to the Saviour because the minister smiled at the baby. I never heard of anybody getting to heaven through frowning at the baby, or at anyone else. Certain wonderfully good persons go through the world as if they were commissioned to impress everybody with the awful solemnity of religion: they resemble a winter's night without a moon; nobody seems attracted, nor even impressed, by them except in the direction of dislike. I saw a life-buoy the other day covered with luminous paint. How bright it seemed, how suitable to be cast upon the dark sea to help a drowning man! An ordinary lifebuoy he would never see, but this is so bright and luminous that a man must see it. Give me a soul-winner bright with holy joy, for he will be seen by the sorrowing soul, and his help will be accepted. Cover your lives with the luminous paint of cheerfulness, compounded of joy and peace through believing. Smile Christ into mourners' hearts by God's grace. It can be done if the Holy Spirit will only give you a lesson.

Jesus welcomed them, let us warmly welcome all comers. Do not seem to say to them, "You want to be saved, do you?" "Yes." "You had better mind what you are about: you know there are a great many hypocrites. I am not sure of your sincerity. Do you really want to be saved?" If the seeker cries, "O sir, what must I do to be saved?" do not answer with icy words, "Do not be so excited. Be calm, and let me lay the gospel before you in a clear, didactic manner, for fear you should be deceived. I hope it is all right with you, and that these desires are not mere natural excitement, but are the fruit of the Spirit. Still it is my duty to be faithful and put you to the test." Why, my dear friend, if you had been in a right state of heart you would have led that man into the kingdom of heaven before you had got half through those cautious remarks. Give him a loving, hearty welcome, and not a cold, suspicious searching. Say, "Do you want to be saved?" "Yes." "Then come and welcome: believe in the Lord Jesus and he is yours. You want Jesus Christ, do you?" "Yes." "Come along: he waits to be gracious; he is here present; and all you have to do is to trust in him.

I put this in a very simple way; but there is very much in it.

Jesus, the Master, welcomed sinners ; let all his servants wear the livery of love, and set wide open every door for sinners to enter. "But perhaps there is very little good in these who say they are seeking." The remark is no doubt correct, perhaps there is no good at all in them. What then? Let us welcome them all the same. Did not our Lord receive you when there was no good about you? Should not you also receive such, and set the gospel before them, that God the Holy Spirit may bless them?

"But some are so poor that if they are received into the Church they will be of no service to it: they will rather be dependent upon its charity than helpful to its funds." Yes, but these are the sort of people that our Lord used to welcome, and why should not we? It will be an evil day for any church when it despises any class of men. There will come a curse upon a church that looks to men's garments and purses, and values them according to the guinea stamp. This will never do. Is he a man? Then he has an immortal soul about him. Does he seek the Saviour? Christ bids us encourage him. Is he a sinner? Christ can cleanse him. Is he troubled about his sin? Jesus can give him rest. Let us help him, however loathsome his past life may have been, and however little he may be able to do in return.

If anyone here wishes to find mercy and cannot find it, I would during the last minute of my discourse try to welcome him. Friend, thou sayest, "How can I be saved!" Have you ever heard the gospel, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"? "Yes," say you, "but I do not think I believe aright." Listen. Here is a verse for you. Get out your New Testament. Look out John v. 24. Turn it down. Turn it down, and read it when you get home. I beg all of you who have not found the Saviour to mark that passage: read it carefully, and keep on reading it over and over again for an hour. Read it over ten thousand times, if need be, for I want you to find salvation through it. I know this text will save any man living, God blessing it to him. Here it is:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

What a grand verse! Is there anything in it about believing *aright*? Not a syllable. Only let a man truly believe and he "hath" (it is not said "shall have")—he has now "everlasting life." Mark that,—not a life that will die out in a quarter of a year if he does not mind,—no, but "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Suck at that text, poor soul: salvation lies in it. Believe in Jesus and you are saved. May God help you to believe it by his blessed Spirit, and you shall live unto him henceforth and for ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark vi. 7—44.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 490, 509.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WITHOUT CHRIST—NOTHING.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23RD, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Without me ye can do nothing.”—John xv. 5.

THIS is not the language of a man of ordinary mould. No saint, no prophet, no apostle would ever have addressed a company of faithful men, and have said to them, “Without me ye can do nothing.” Had Jesus Christ been, as some say, a good man, and nothing more, such language as this would have been unseemly and inconsistent. Among the virtues of a perfect man we must certainly reckon modesty, but this from a mere man would have been shamelessly immodest. It is impossible to conceive that Jesus of Nazareth, had he not been more than man, could ever have uttered the sentence, “Without me ye can do nothing.” My brethren, I hear in this sentence the voice of that Divine Person without whom was not anything made that was made. The majesty of the words reveals the Godhead of him that uttered them. The “I am” comes out in the personal word “me,” and the claim of all power unveils the Omnipotent. These words mean Godhead or nothing. The spirit in which we listen to this language is that of adoration. Let us bow our heads in solemn worship, and so unite with the multitude before the throne who ascribe power and dominion and might to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb.

In this adoring state of mind we shall be the better prepared to enter into the innermost soul of the text. I am not going to preach upon the moral inability of the unregenerate, although in that doctrine I most firmly believe; for that truth did not come in our Lord's way when he uttered these words, neither did he allude to it. It is quite true that unregenerate men, being without Christ, can do no spiritual action whatever, and can do nothing which is acceptable in the sight of God; but our Lord was not speaking to unregenerate men at all, nor speaking about them. He was surrounded by his apostles, the eleven out of whom Judas had been weeded, and it is to them as branches of the true vine that he says, “Without me ye can do nothing.” The statement refers to such as are in the vine, and even to such as have been pruned, and have for a while been found abiding in the stem, which is Christ; even

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in such there is an utter incapacity for holy produce if separated from Christ.

We are not called upon just now to speak upon all forms of doing, as beyond us, but of that form of it which is intended in the text. There are certain forms of doing in which men excel who know little or nothing of Christ; but the text must be viewed in its own connection, and the truth is clear. Believers are here described under the figure of branches in the vine, and the doing alluded to must therefore be the bearing of fruit. I might render it, "Apart from me ye can produce nothing—make nothing, create nothing, bring forth nothing." The reference, therefore, is to that doing which may be set forth by the fruit of the vine branch, and therefore to those good works and graces of the Spirit which are expected from men who are spiritually united to Christ: it is of these that he says, "Without me ye can do nothing." Our text is only another form of the fourth verse: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye except ye abide in me." I am therefore going to address myself to you who profess to know and love the Lord, and are anxious to glorify his name, and I have to remind you that union to Christ is essential; for only as you are one with him, and continue to be so, can you bring forth the fruits which prove you to be truly his.

I. Reading again this solemn sentence, "Without me ye can do nothing," it first of all excites in me AN ASPIRATION OF HOPE. There is something to be *done*, our religion is to have a grand practical outcome. I have been thinking of Christ as the vine, and of the myriads of branches in him, and my heart has hoped for great things. From such a root what a vintage must come! Being branches in him, what fruit we must produce! There can be nothing scanty or poverty-stricken in the fruitage of a vine so full of sap. Fruit of the best quality, fruit in the utmost abundance, fruit unrivalled, must be borne by such a vine. That word "*do*" has music in it. Yes, brethren, Jesus went about doing good, and, being in him, we shall do good. Everything about him is efficient, practical,—in a word, fruit-bearing; and being joined to him much will yet be done by us. We have been saved by the almighty grace of God apart from all doings of our own, and now that we are saved we long to *do* something in return: we feel a high ambition to be of some use and service to our great Lord and Master. The text, even though there be a negative in it, yet raises in our soul the hope that ere we go hence and be no more we may even here on earth do something for Christ.

Beloved, there is the ambition and hope before us of doing something in the way of glorifying God by bringing forth *the fruits of holiness, peace, and love*. We would adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by love unfeigned, by every good and holy work we would show forth the praises of our God. Apart from the Lord Jesus we know we cannot be holy; but joined unto him we overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and walk with garments unspotted from the world. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and all manner of holy conversation. For none of these things are we equal in and of ourselves, and yet by faith we say

with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We may be adorned with plentiful clusters, we may cause the Saviour to have joy in us that our joy may be full : great possibilities are before us.

We aspire not only to produce fruit in ourselves, but to bear much *fruit in the conversion of others*, even as Paul desired concerning the Romans, that he might have fruit among them. In this matter we can do nothing whatever alone ; but being united unto Christ we bring forth increase unto the Lord. Our Lord Jesus said, "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto the Father." Brethren, a hope springs up in our bosom that we may each one of us bring many souls to Jesus. Not because we have any power in ourselves, but because we are united to Jesus we joyfully hope to bring forth fruit in the way of leading others to the knowledge of the gospel.

My soul takes fire of hope, and I say to myself, If it be so, all these branches, and all alive, how much *fruit of further blessing* will ripen for this poor world. Men shall be blessed in us because we are blessed in Christ. What must be the influence of ten thousand godly examples ! What must be the influence upon our country of thousands of Christian men and women practically advancing love, peace, justice, virtue, holiness ! And if each one is seeking to bring others to Christ what numerous conversions there must be, and how largely must the church of God be increased. Do you not know that if there were only ten thousand real Christians in the world, yet if each one of these brought one other to Christ every year it would not need twenty years to accomplish the conversion of the entire population of the globe ? This is a simple sum in arithmetic which any schoolboy can work out. Certainly it looks a small thing that each one should bring another to the Lord ; and surely if we are one with him we may hope to see it done. So I sit me down and dream right comfortably, according to the promise, "Your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." See these thousands of branches, proceeding from such a stem as Christ Jesus, and with such sap as the Holy Ghost flowing through them ; why, surely, this vine must soon clothe the mountains with its verdure, and there shall not remain a single barren rock unadorned with the blessed foliage ! Then shall the mountains drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. Not because of any natural fertility in the branches, but because of their glorious root, and stem, and sap, each one shall bear full clusters, and each fruitful bough shall run over the wall. Beloved friends in Christ, have you not strong desires to see some such consummation ? Do you not long to take a share in the high enterprise of winning the world to Christ ? Oh, ye that are young and full of spirits, do you not long to press to the front of this great crusade ? Our souls pine to see the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is glad tidings to us that, joined unto Christ, we can do something in this great business, something upon which the Lord will smile, something which shall redound to the glory of his name. We are not condemned to inaction ; we are not denied the joy of service, the superior blessedness of giving and of doing : the Lord hath chosen us and ordained us to go and bring forth fruit, fruit that shall remain. This is the aspiration

which rises in our soul; the Lord grant that we may see it take actual form in our lives.

II. But now, in the second place, there passes through my heart a shudder,—A SHUDDER OF FEAR. Albeit I glow and burn with strong desire, and rise upon the wing of a mighty ambition to do something great for Christ, yet I read the text, and a sudden trembling takes hold upon me. "Without me":—it is possible, then, that I may be without Christ, and so may be utterly incapacitated for all good. Come, friends, I want you to feel, even though it cast a cold chill over you, that you may possibly be "without Christ." I would have you feel it in the very marrow of your bones, yea, in the centre of your hearts. You profess to be in Christ; but are you so? The large majority of those to whom I speak this morning are visible members of the visible church of Christ; but what if you should *not be so in him as to bring forth fruit*? Evidently there are branches which in a certain sense are in the vine, and yet bring forth no fruit! It is written, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." Yes, you are a member, perhaps an elder, perhaps a deacon, possibly a minister, and so you are in the vine; but are you bringing forth the fruits of holiness? Are you consecrated? Are you endeavouring to bring others to Jesus Christ? Or is your profession a thing apart from a holy life, and devoid of all influence upon others? Does it give you a name among the people of God and nothing more? Say, is it a mere natural association with the church, or is it a living, supernatural union with Christ? Let the thought go through you and prostrate you before him who looks down from heaven upon you, and lifts his pierced hand, and cries, "Without me ye can do nothing." My friend, if you are without Christ, what is the use of carrying on that Bible-class; for you can do nothing? What is the use of my coming to this pulpit if I am without Christ? What is the use of your going down into the Sunday-school this afternoon if, after all, you are without Christ? Unless we have the Lord Jesus ourselves we cannot take him to others. Unless within us we have the living water springing up unto eternal life, we cannot overflow so that out of our midst shall flow rivers of living water.

I will put the thought another way,—What if you should be in Christ, and *not so in him as to abide in him*? It appears from our Lord's words that some branches in him are cast forth and are withered. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Some who are called by his name, and reckoned among his disciples, whose names are heard whenever the muster-roll of the church is read, yet do not continue in him. My hearer, what if it should happen that you are only in Christ on a Sunday, but in the world all the week! What if you are only in Christ at the communion table, or at the prayer-meeting, or at certain periods of devotion? What if you are off and on with Christ! What if you play fast and loose with the Lord! What if you are an outside saint and an inside devil! Ah me, what will come of such conduct as this? And yet some persist in attempting to hold an intermittent communion with Christ; in Christ to-day because it is the Sabbath; out of Christ to-morrow because it is the market, and obedience to Christ might be inconvenient when they buy and sell. This will not do. We must be so in Christ as to be always in him, or else

we are not living branches of the living vine, and we cannot produce fruit. If there were such a thing as a vine branch that was only occasionally joined to the stem, would you expect it to yield a cluster to the husbandman? So neither can you if you are off and on with Christ. You can do nothing if there be not constant union.

One year when I was travelling towards my usual winter resting-place I halted at Marseilles, and there was overtaken by great pain. In my room in the hotel I found it cold, and so I asked for a fire. I was sitting in a very desponding mood, when suddenly the tears came to my eyes, as if smitten with a great sorrow. I shall never forget the thoughts which stirred my heart. The porter came in to light the fire. He had in his hand a bundle of twigs. I called to him to let me look at it. He was about to push it into the stove as fuel with which to kindle the fire. As I took the bundle into my hand, I found it was made of vine branches—branches that had been cut off now that the pruning time was come. Ah me, I thought, will this be my portion? Here I am, away from home, unable to bear fruit, as I love to do. Shall I end with this as my portion? Shall I be gathered for the fire? Those vine shoots were parts of a good vine, no doubt—branches that once looked fair and green; but now they were fuel for the flame. They had been cut off and cast off as useless things, and then men gathered them and tied them in bundles, and they were ignobly thrust into the fire. What a picture! There goes a bundle of ministers into the fire! There is a bundle of elders! There's another bundle of deacons, a bundle of church members, a bundle of Sunday-school teachers! "Men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Dear brothers and sisters, shall this be the lot of any of us who have named the name of Christ? Well did I say a shudder may go through us as we listen to those words, "without me." Our end without Christ will be terrible indeed. First, no fruit; then no life; and at last no place among the saints, no existence in the church of God. Without Christ we do nothing, we are nothing, we are worse than nothing. This is the condition of the heathen now, and it was our own condition once; God forbid that we should find it to be our condition now—"without Christ, having no hope!" Here is grave cause for heart-searching, and I leave the matter with you to that end.

III. Having come so far in our second head, under the third I behold A VISION OF TOTAL FAILURE. "Without me," says the text, "ye can do nothing"—ye can produce nothing. The visible church of Christ has tried this experiment a great many times already, and always with the same result. Separated from Christ, his church can do nothing which she was formed to do. She is sent into the world upon a high enterprise, with noble aims before her, and grand forces at her disposal; but if she could cease from communion with Christ she would become wholly incapable.

Now what are the outward signs of any community being apart from Christ? Answer, first, It may be seen in a *ministry without Christ in its doctrine*. This we have seen ourselves. Woe worth the day that it is so! History tells us that not only in the Romish church and the Anglican church, but among the Nonconformist churches, Christ has been at times forgotten. Not only among Unitarians, but among Presbyterians,

Methodists, Baptists, all round, Jesus has been dishonoured. Attempts have been made to do something without Christ as the truth to be preached. Ah me, what folly it is! They preach up intellectualism, and hope that this will be the great power of God; but it is not. "Surely," say they, "novelties of thought and refinements of speech will attract and win! The preachers aspire to be leaders of thought; will they not command the multitude and charm the intelligent? Add music and architecture, and what is to hinder success?" Many a young minister has given up his whole mind to this—to try and be exceedingly refined and intellectual; and what has he done with these showy means? The sum total is expressed in the text—"Nothing": "Without me ye can do nothing." What emptiness this folly has created: when the pulpit is without Christ the pews are soon without people. I knew a chapel where an eminent divine was to be heard for years. A converted Jew coming to London to visit a friend, set out on Sunday morning to find a place of Christian worship, and he chanced to enter the chapel of this eminent divine. When he came back he said that he feared he had made a mistake; he had turned into a building which he hoped was a Christian place of assembly; but as he had not heard the name of Jesus all the morning, he thought perhaps he had fallen in with some other religionists. I fear that many modern sermons might just as fairly have been delivered in a Mahometan mosque as in a Christian church. We have too many preachers of whom we might complain, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." Christianity without Christ is a strange thing indeed. And what comes of it where it is held up to the people? Why, by-and-by there are not enough people to support the ministry; empty benches are plentiful, and the thing gets pretty nearly wound up. Blessed be God for it! I am heartily glad that without Christ these pretended ministers cannot prosper. Leave Christ out of the preaching and you shall do nothing. Only advertize it all over London, Mr. Baker, that you are making bread without flour; put it in every paper, "Bread without flour;" and you may soon shut up your shop, for your customers will hurry off to other tradesmen. Somehow there is a strange prejudice in people's minds in favour of bread made of flour, and there is also an unaccountable prejudice in the human mind which makes men think that if there be a gospel it must have Christ in it. A sermon without Christ as its beginning, middle, and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution. However grand the language it will be merely much-ado-about-nothing if Christ be not there. Ay, and I mean by Christ not merely his example and the ethical precepts of his teaching, but his atoning blood, his wondrous satisfaction made for human sin, and the grand doctrine of "believe and live." If "Life for a look at the Crucified One" be obscured, all is dark; if justification by faith be not set in the very forefront in the full blaze of light, nothing can be accomplished. Without Christ in the doctrine ye shall do nothing.

Further, without acknowledging always *the absolute supremacy of Christ* we shall do nothing. Jesus is much complimented nowadays; but he is not submitted to as absolute Lord. I hear many pretty things about Christ from men who reject his gospel. "Lives of Christ"

we have in any quantity. Oh for one which would set him forth in his glory as God, as Head of the church and Lord of all. I should greatly like to see a "Life of Christ" written by one who knew him by communion with him and by reverently sitting at his feet. Most of the pretty things about Jesus which I read nowadays seem to have been written by persons who have seen him through a telescope at a great distance, and know him "according to Matthew," but not according to personal fellowship. Oh for a "Life of Christ" by Samuel Rutherford or George Herbert, or by some other sweet spirit to whom the ever-blessed One is as a familiar friend. Certain modern praises of Jesus are written upon the theory that, on the whole, the Saviour has given us a religion that is tolerably suited to the enlightenment of the nineteenth century, and may be allowed to last a little longer. Jesus is commended by these critics, and somewhat admired as preferable to most teachers; but he is by no means to be blindly followed. It is fortunate for Jesus that he commends himself to the "best thought" and ripest culture of the period; for, if he had not done so, these wise gentlemen would have exposed him as being behind the times. Of course they have every now and then to rectify certain of his dogmas, especially such as justification by faith, or atonement, or the doctrine of election—these are old-fashioned things, which belong to an older and less enlightened period, and therefore they adapt them by tearing out their real meaning. The doctrines of grace, according to the infallible critics of the period, are out of date—nobody believes them now, and so they settle off old-fashioned believers as non-existent. Christ is rectified and squared, and his garment without seam is taken off, and he is dressed out in proper style, as by a West-End clothier; then he is introduced to us as a remarkable teacher, and we are advised to accept him as far as he goes. For the present the wise ones tolerate Jesus; but there is no telling what is to come: the progress of this age is so astonishing that it is just possible we shall before long leave Christ and Christianity behind. Now, what will come of this foolish wisdom? Nothing but delusions, mischief, infidelity, anarchy, and all manner of imaginable and unimaginable ills. The fact is, if you do not acknowledge Christ to be all, you have virtually left him out, and are without him. We must preach the gospel, because Christ has revealed it. "Thus saith the Lord," is to be our logic. We must preach the gospel as ambassadors delivering their message; that is to say, in the King's name, by an authority not their own. We preach our doctrines, not because we consider that they are convenient and profitable, but because Christ has commanded us to proclaim them. We believe the doctrines of grace, not because the enlightenment of the age sets its wonderful imprimatur upon them, but because they are true and are the voice of God. Age or no age has nothing to do with us. The world hates Christ and must hate him: if it would boldly denounce Christ it would be to us a more hopeful sign than its deceitful Judas kiss. We keep simply to this,—the Lord hath said it, and we care not who approves or disapproves. Jesus is God and Head of the church, and we must do what he bids us, and say what he tells us: if we fail in this, nothing of good will come of it. If the church gets back to her loyalty she shall see what her Lord will do; but without Christ as absolute Lord,

infallible Teacher, and honoured King, all must be failure even to the end.

Go a little further: you may have sound doctrine, and yet do nothing unless you have Christ *in your spirit*. I have known all the doctrines of grace to be unmistakably preached, and yet there have been no conversions; for this reason, that they were not expected and scarcely desired. In former years many orthodox preachers thought it to be their sole duty to comfort and confirm the godly few who by dint of great perseverance found out the holes and corners in which they prophesied. These brethren spoke of sinners as of people whom God might possibly gather in if he thought fit to do so; but they did not care much whether he did so or not. As to weeping over sinners as Christ wept over Jerusalem; as to venturing to invite them to Christ as the Lord did when he stretched out his hands all the day long; as to lamenting with Jeremiah over a perishing people, they had no sympathy with such emotions, and feared that they savoured of Arminianism. Both preacher and congregation were cased in a hard shell, and lived as if their own salvation was the sole design of their existence. If anybody did grow zealous and seek conversions, straightway they said he was indiscreet, or conceited. When a church falls into this condition it is, as to its spirit, "without Christ." What comes of it? Some of you know by your own observation what does come of it. The comfortable corporation exists and grows for a little while, but it comes to nothing in the long run; and so it must: there can be no fruit-bearing where there is not the spirit of Christ as well as the doctrine of Christ. Except the spirit of the Lord rests upon you, causing you to agonize for the salvation of men even as Jesus did, ye can do nothing.

But above all things we must have Christ with us in the power of *his actual presence*. Do we always think of this—"Without me ye can do nothing"? We are going out this afternoon to teach the young; shall we be quite sure to take Christ with us? or on the road shall we suddenly stop and say, "I am without my Master, and I must not dare to go another step"? The abiding consciousness of the love of Christ in our soul is the essential element of our strength. We can no more convert a sinner without Christ than we could light up new stars in the sky. Power to change the human will, power to enlighten the intellect as to the things of God, and to influence the mind as to repentance and faith, must come entirely from the Most High. Do we feel that? or do we put our thoughts together for an address, and say, "Now, that is a strong point, and that will produce effect"; and do we rest there? If so, we can do nothing at all. The power lies with the Master, not with the servant; the might is in the hand, not in the weapon. We must have Christ in these pews and in these aisles, and in this pulpit, and Christ down in our Sunday-school, and Christ at the street corner when we stand up there to talk of him, and we must feel that he is with us even to the end of the world, or we shall do nothing.

We have, then, before us a vision of total failure if we attempt in any way to do without Christ. He says, "Without me ye can do nothing:" it is in the *doing* that the failure is most conspicuous. You may *talk* a good deal without him; you may hold congresses, and conferences, and conventions; but *doing* is another matter. Without Jesus you can

talk any quantity ; but without him you can *do* nothing. The most eloquent discourse without him will be all a bottle of smoke. You shall lay your plans, and arrange your machinery, and start your schemes ; but without the Lord you will do nothing. Immeasurable cloudland of proposals and not a spot of solid doing large enough for a dove's foot to rest on—such shall be the end of all ! You may have all the money that generosity can lavish, all the learning that your universities can supply, and all the oratory that the most gifted can lay at your feet ; but "without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing." Fuss, flare, fireworks, and failure ; that is the end of it. "Without me ye can do nothing." Let me repeat those words again, "Do nothing." "Do nothing," and the world dying around us ! Africa in darkness ! China perishing ! Hindostan sunk in superstition, and a church which can do nothing ! No bread to be handed out to the hungry, and the multitude fainting and dying ! The rock to be smitten and the water of life to leap out for the thirsty, but not a drop forthcoming, because Jesus is not there. Ministers, evangelists, churches, salvation armies, the world dies for want of you, and yet "ye can do nothing" if your Lord is away. The age shall advance in discovery, and men of science shall do their little best, but you shall do "nothing" without Christ, absolutely nothing ! You shall not proceed a single inch upon your toilsome way, though you row till the oars snap with the strain ; you shall be drifted back by winds and currents unless you take Jesus into the ship. Remember that all the while the great Husbandman is watching you, for his eye is on every vine-branch. He sees that you are producing no grapes, and he is coming round with that sharp knife of his, cutting here and there ! What must become of you who produce nothing ? It makes one's very soul to curdle within him to think that we should live to do nothing. Yet I fear that thousands of Christians get no further than this ; they are not immoral, dishonest, or profane ; but they do nothing. They think of what they would like to do, and they plan and they propose ; but they *do* nothing. There are buds in plenty, but not a single grape is produced and all because they do not get, into that vital, overflowing, effectual communion with Christ which would fill them with life, and constrain them to bring forth fruit unto the glory of God. There is a vision, then, of the failure all along the line if we try to do without Christ.

IV. But now, fourthly, I hear A VOICE OF WISDOM, a still small voice which speaks out of the text, and says to us who are in Christ, *let us acknowledge this*. Down on your knees, bow your mouths in the dust and say, "Lord, it is true : without thee we can do nothing, nothing whatever that is good and acceptable in the sight of God. We have not ability of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, but our ability is of God." Now, do not speak thus, as if you paid a compliment which orthodoxy requires you to make ; but from the deeps of your soul, smitten with an absolute self-despair, own the truth unto God. "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which I would I find not." Lord, I am a good-for-nothing do-nothing, a fruitless, barren, dry, rotten branch without thee, and this I feel in my inmost soul. Be not far from me, but quicken me by thy presence.

Next, *let us pray*. If without Christ we can do nothing, let us cry to

him that we may never be without him. Let us with strong crying and tears entreat his abiding presence. He comes to those who seek him: let us never cease seeking. In conscious fellowship with him, let us plead that the fellowship should be unbroken evermore. Let us pray that we may be so knit and joined to Jesus that we may be one spirit with him, never to be separated from him again. Master and Lord, let the life floods of thy grace never cease to flow into us, for we know that we must be thus supplied or we can produce nothing. Brethren, let us have much more prayer than has been usual among us. Prayer is appointed to convey the blessings God ordains to give; let us constantly use the appointed means, and may the result be ever increasing from day to day.

Next, *let us personally cleave to Jesus*. Let us not attempt a life of separation; for that were to seek the living among the dead. Do not let us depart from him for a single minute. Would you like to be caught at any one second of your life in a condition in which you could do nothing? I must confess I should not like to be in that state—incapable of defence against my enemies, or of service for my Lord. If an awakened one should come before you under distress of mind, and you should feel quite incapable of doing any good to him, what a sad perplexity. Or if you did not *feel* incapable, and yet should really be so, and what if you should therefore talk on in a religious way, but know no power in it; would it not be a sad thing? May you never be in such a state that you would be a do-nothing, with opportunities afforded and yet without strength to utilize them! If you are divided from Christ you are divided from the possibility of doing good; cling, therefore, to the Saviour with your whole might, and let nothing take you off from him; no, not for an hour.

Heartily submit yourselves, also, dear friends, to the Lord's headship and leadership, and ask to do everything in his style and way. He will not be with you unless you accept him as your Master. There must be no quarrel about supremacy, but you must yield yourself up absolutely to him, to be, to do, or to suffer, according to his will. When it is wholly so he will be with you, and you shall do everything that is required of you. Wonderful things will the Lord perform through you when once he is your all in all. Will we not have it so?

Once more; *joyfully believe in him*. Though without him you can do nothing, yet with him all things are possible. Omnipotence is in that man who has Christ in him. Weakness itself you may be, but you shall learn to glory in that weakness because the power of Christ doth rest upon you if your union and communion with Christ are continually kept up. Oh for a grand confidence in Christ! We have not believed in him yet up to the measure of the hem of his garment; for even that faith made the sick woman whole. Oh to believe up to the measure of his infinite Deity! Oh for the splendour of the faith which measures itself by the Christ in whom it trusts! May God bring us there, then shall we bring forth much fruit to the glory of his name.

V. And now, lastly. While I was listening to my text as a child puts a shell to its ear and listens till it hears the deep sea rolling in its windings, I heard within my text A SONG OF CONTENT. "Without me ye can do nothing." My heart said, "Lord, what is there that I

want to do without thee? There is no pain in this thought to me. If I can do without thee I am sorry to possess so dangerous a power. I am happy to be deprived of all strength except that which comes from thee. It charms, it exhilarates, and delights my soul to think that thou art my all. Thou hast made me penniless as to all wealth of my own, that I might dip my hand into thy treasury; thou hast taken all power away from every sinew and muscle of mine, that I may rest on thy bosom." "Without me ye can do nothing." Be it so. Brethren, are you not all agreed? Do you wish to have it altered, any of you that love his dear name? I am sure you do not; for suppose, dear friends, we could do something without Christ, then he would not have the glory of it. Who wishes that? There would be little crowns for our poor little heads, for we should have done something without him; but now there is one great crown for that dear head which once was girt with thorns; for all his saints put together cannot do anything without him. The goodly fellowship of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and the triumphant host of the redeemed by blood, all put together, can do nothing without Jesus. Let him be crowned with majesty who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure. For our own sakes, for our Lord's sake, we are glad that it is so. All things are more ours by being his; and if our fruit is his rather than our own, it is none the less but all the more ours. Is not this rare music for a holy ear?

I feel so glad that without Christ we can do nothing because I fear that if the church could do something without Christ she would try to live without him. If she could teach the school and bring the children to salvation without Christ, I am afraid Christ would never go into a Sunday-school again. If we could preach successfully without Jesus, I suspect that the Lord Jesus Christ would seldom stand on high among the people again. If our Christian literature could bless men without Christ, I am afraid we should set the printing-press going, and never think about the crucified One in the matter. If there could be work done by the church without Jesus, there would be rooms into which he would never be invited; and these would soon become a sort of Blue Beard's chambers, full of horror. A something that we could do without Christ! Why the mass of the church would get to working that machinery tremendously, and all the rest would be neglected, and so it is a blessed thing for the whole church that she must have Christ everywhere.

"Without me ye can do nothing." As I listened to the song within these words I began to laugh: I wonder if you will laugh too. It was to myself I laughed, like Abraham of old. I thought of those who are going to destroy the orthodox doctrine from off the face of the earth. How they boast of the decline and death of old-fashioned evangelism. I have read once or twice that I am the last of the Puritans, the race is all dying out. To this I demur: I am willing to be esteemed last in merit, but not last as ending the race. There are many others who are steadfast in the faith. They say our old theology is decaying, and that nobody believes it. It is all a lie; but wise men say so, and therefore we are bound to consider ourselves obsolete and extinct. We are, in their esteem, as much out of date as antediluvians would be could

they walk down our streets. Yes, they are going to quench our coal and blot us out from Israel. Newspapers and reviews and the general intelligence of the age all join to dance upon our graves. Put on your night-caps, ye good people of the evangelical order, and go home to bed and sleep the sleep of the righteous, for the end of you is come. Thus say the Philistines, but the armies of the Lord think not so. The adversaries exult exceedingly; but Christ is not with them. They know very little about him, they do not work in his spirit, nor cry him up, nor extol the gospel of his precious blood, and so I believe that when they have done their little best it will come to nothing. "Without me ye can do nothing:" if this be true of apostles, much more of opposers! If his friends can do nothing without him, I am sure his foes can do nothing against him. If they that follow his steps and lie in his bosom can do nothing without him, I am sure his adversaries cannot, and so I laughed at their laughter and smiled at their confusion. I laughed, too, because I recollected a story of a New England service when the pastor one afternoon was preaching in his own solemn way, and the good people were listening or sleeping, as their minds inclined. It was a substantial edifice wherein they assembled, fit to outlive an earthquake. All went on peacefully in the meeting-house that afternoon till suddenly a lunatic started up, denounced the minister, and declared that he would at once pull down the meeting-house about their ears. Taking hold of one of the pillars of the gallery, this newly-announced Samson repeated his threatening. Everybody rose; the women were ready to faint; the men began to rush to the door, and there was danger that the people would be trodden on as they rushed down the aisles. There was about to be a great tumult; no one could see the end of it; when suddenly one cool brother sitting near the pulpit produced a calm by a single sentence. "Let him try!" was the stern sarcasm which hushed the tempest. Even so to-day the enemy is about to disprove the gospel and crush out the doctrines of grace. Are you distressed, alarmed, astounded? So far from that, my reply to the adversary's boast that he will pull down the pillars of our Zion is this only,—LET HIM TRY! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, 407 677.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The principal wheat."—Isaiah xxviii. 25.

THE whole passage runs on this wise: "Give ye ear, and hear my voice; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." The prophet, inspired of God, shows that the husbandman is wise and skilful in the management of his farm, in ploughing, sowing, and threshing, and in all the processes of husbandry. He asserts that this skill has been taught him of his God. I suppose that this is set before us, not as poetry, but as fact. The wisdom of earth is a reflection of the light of heaven. Have you not read—"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship"? God is the great teacher of agriculture as well as of handicrafts. If there had not been some information concerning husbandry conveyed to our first parent when he left the garden of Eden he would not have known how to till the soil, and produce a harvest, and before he had found it out by experience he would have died of starvation, and the race would have ended with him.

No. 1,626.

The twenty-sixth verse says, "His God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him." Yes, God has taught men the rudiments of husbandry; and I conclude therefore, that if God gives men instruction so that they are able to cultivate the land and produce a harvest of divers kinds of seed, he will much more instruct us if we wait upon him as to the tillage of our lives, so that we may not sow to the flesh and reap corruption, but may learn how to sow to the Spirit, and may of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We are all of us husbandmen. Some of us may be wicked husbandmen who slay the heir; or slothful husbandmen who suffer hemlock and darnel to come up where there should be wheat and barley; or fickle husbandmen who having put our hand to the plough have looked back; but we all have fields to till and work to do for the great Landlord to whom all things belong. If any of us wish to be true husbandmen, and so to sow and so to reap as to be found accepted of our great Lord, and to produce a harvest unto his glory, then we had better go to him for instruction, and ask him to teach us knowledge, and guide us in the way of wisdom. Breathe that prayer to God now, and may he hear it on behalf of every one of us by sending us his Holy Spirit.

I. There is one point which the prophet mentions as a matter of wisdom on the part of the husbandman. It is this: that HE KNOWS WHAT IS THE PRINCIPAL SEED TO CULTIVATE, and makes it his principal object. My text is, "Does not the husbandman cast in the principal wheat?" He does not set to work at haphazard without thought, and go to the granary and take out wheat, and cummin, and barley, and rye, and fling these about right and left; but he estimates the value of each grain, and arranges them in his mind according to their proportionate values. He does not think that cummin, and dill, and caraway, which he merely grows to give a flavour to his dish on the table, is at all of such importance as the wheat; and, though rye and barley have their values, yet he does not reckon that even these are equal to the corn which he calls "the principal wheat." He is a man of discretion, *he arranges things*, and he places the most important thing in the front rank, and spends upon it the most care.

Herein I would have you learn of the husbandman. Do keep things distinct in your minds—not mixed and muddled by a careless thoughtlessness. Do not live a huddled life, without care and discretion, running all things into one; but sort them out, and divide and distinguish between the precious and the vile. See what this is worth, and what the other is worth, and set your matters in rank and order, making some of them principal, and others inferior. I suggest to you young people especially that, in starting life, you say to yourselves, "What shall we seek for?" For he that seeketh findeth. "What shall we sow?" "For whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." The little things of this life are to be attended to, as a man may sow cummin and fitches; there are some inferior things that ought not to be left undone, as a man should sow rye and barley in their appointed place. Still *there is some principal thing*—some master thing—some chief thing for which we ought to live,—and what shall that be? What ought to be the principal crop that we shall endeavour to cultivate in our hearts and lives? Have you turned that over? Have you really put the problem before

you? or have you gone at it hit or miss, as if it did not matter what.

Remember, the eye is a most important part of the body. How shall man direct his steps if he cannot see? And the motive is the eye. What have you an eye to? What are you living for? What is the principal aim with you? Is it going to be that of the old gentleman satirized in Horace who said to his son—"Get money: get it honestly, you can; but, by all means, get money"? Is money-getting to be the principal wheat with you? Or will you choose a life of pleasure—"a short life and a merry one," as so many fools have said to their great sorrow? Is it in dissipation that your life is to be spent? Are thistles to be your principal crop? Because there is a pleasure in looking at a crotch thistle, do you intend to grow acres of pleasurable vices? And will you make your bed upon them when you come to die? Oh, look and see what is worthy of being the principal object in life; and, when you have found that out, then pray God of his Holy Spirit to help you to choose that one thing, and to give all your powers and faculties to the cultivation of it. The farmer, who finds that wheat ought to be his principal crop, makes it so, and lays himself out with that end in view. He looks around and says, "What is the best thing for me to produce?" And when he has found it out he calls it his principal thing. Dear friends, do, I pray you, remember that true godliness is the principal thing; therefore get it and prize it above all things.

Now, mark that this farmer was wise, because *he counted that to be principal which was most needful*. His family could do without cummin, which was but a flavouring. Even the fitches are thought to have been a plant which yielded a grain used in giving a taste to bread, but they were not a valuable crop. The family could do without cummin and fitches. Perhaps the mistress might complain, or the cook might grumble; but that did not signify so much as it would do if the children died for bread. They certainly could not do without wheat, for bread is the staff of life. It is bread that strengtheneth man's heart, and therefore the Eastern farmer must grow bread if he does not grow anything else. That which is most necessary he makes to be the principal thing.

Is not this common sense? If we were wisely to sit down and estimate, should we not say, "To be forgiven my sin, to be right with God, to be holy, to be fit to live eternally in heaven, is the greatest, the most needful thing for me, and therefore I will make it the principal object of my pursuit"? To glorify God and to enjoy him for ever is the most necessary thing for a creature; for a creature cannot be satisfied unless he is answering the end for which he was created, and this is the end of every intelligent creature, first, that he may glorify God, and next, that he may enjoy God. What a bliss it must be to enjoy God himself for ever and ever. Other things may be desirable, but this thing is needful. A certain competence, a measure of esteem among men, a degree of health—all these are the flavouring of life, but to be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, this is life itself: this is the bread by which our soul's best life is to be sustained. Oh, that we were all wise enough to feel that to be one with Christ is the most needful; that to be at peace with God is the principal thing;

that to be brought into harmony with the Most High is the true music of life. The moralities and courtesies of life, like the minor seeds, may take their place in due order upon our farm; but the fear of the Lord is the principal wheat, and we must cultivate it with our whole heart.

This farmer was wise, because *he made that to be the principal thing which was the most fit to be so.* Of course, barley is very useful as food. Nations have lived on barley bread, and lived healthily too; and rye has been the nutriment of whole nations: neither have men starved when restricted to oats, and other grains. Still, for all in all, give me good wheaten flour. I know our Scotch friends like oat-cake better, but I hardly think that we shall all come to their mind while wheat flour is of a reasonable price. We still like a piece of wheaten bread, and look upon it as being the best staff of life. The oat is rather a knotty staff, but wheat is a fair good walking-cane, with which a man may go through life right merrily. Only give men enough of bread, and why should they complain? though I suppose they would, for even when the Israelites had manna in the wilderness, and that was angels' food, they called it light bread. Brethren, the Eastern farmer knew that wheat was the most fitting food for man, and so he did not put the inferior grain, which might act as a substitute, into the prominent place; but he planted the most fitting thing, namely, the wheat, into the most prominent position. He did not speak of "the principal barley," or "the principal rye," much less "the principal cummin," or "the principal fitches," but "the principal wheat."

And what is there, brethren, that is so fit for the heart, the mind, the soul of man as to know God and his Christ? Other mental foods, such as the fruits of knowledge, and the dainties of science, excellent though they may be, are inferior nutriment and unsuitable to build up the entire structure of our manhood. If I can get my God, my Saviour, I find my heaven and my all. My soul sits down to a crumb of truth concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and finds the greatest satisfaction in living upon it. The more we can know God, and enjoy God, and become like God, and the more Christ is our daily bread, the more do we perceive the fitness of all this to the new-born soul. O beloved, make that to be your principal thing which is the fittest theme for an immortal mind.

"Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below;
May I its great importance learn,
Its sovereign virtue know!

"More needful this than glittering wealth,
Or aught the world bestows;
Not reputation, food, or health,
Can give us such repose."

Moreover, this farmer was wise, because *he made that the principal thing which was the most profitable.* Under certain circumstances, in our own country, wheat is not the most profitable thing which a man can grow; but, ordinarily, wheat is the best crop that the earth yields for general consumption, and therefore the text speaks of "the principal wheat." Our grandfathers used to rely upon the wheat stack to pay the rent. They looked to their corn as the arm of their strength; and

it is not so now, yet so it always was of old, and perhaps it may be so again. Anyhow, the figure is just as good with regard to true religion: to fear the Lord is the most profitable thing. I am told that men at the present time find it hard to get hold of anything that yields five per cent. Oh, but this blessed fear of the Lord is an ordinarily profitable kind of business, for it brings in far more than red per cent. or a thousand per cent. In this business a man without any capital; in fact, he commences over head and ears, and yet he makes a fortune such as misers never dream of. I will say it is a strange way of starting in business: but the beginner does so. When he comes to God he is penniless, and as much in debt as he can be: the Lord discharges his heavy arrears of debt, and then the believer rises in riches by sinking more deeply into debt of another kind; not of sin, but of gratitude. He owes his great debt more and more, till he is quite unable even to imagine the depth of his obligation. Neither does this grieve him, he comes to love the debt, which enables him to avail himself of the heavenly treasury; he aspires to be more and more deeply in debt to the sovereign Lord of God; his ambition is to increase his obligations, which even overwhelm him. He grows richer as he feels himself poorer, and stronger as he knows more of his personal infirmity. It is a full business this, in which bankrupts make fortunes, in which the poor rise to sit among princes.

“Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large;
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge.

“But let our debts be what they may,
However great or small,
As soon as we have nought to pay,
Our Lord forgives us all.”

Freely discharged of our sins, we are by overflowing grace greatly enriched, so that we number among our possessions heaven itself, God himself, God himself. All things are ours. Oh, what a blessed privilege is to enter upon! There never was such a transaction as this; when an empty sinner trades with a full Saviour he is himself filled with the fulness of God. Assuredly this soul-enriching communion with Christ ought to be first upon our thoughts.

Let godliness be the principal wheat, for there is nothing so profitable. Godliness is profitable for the life that now is, and for that which is to come. Godliness is a blessing to a man's body: it keeps him from drunkenness and vice. It is a blessing to his soul: it makes it content and pure. It is a blessing to him every way. If I had to choose between a dog, I would like to live like a Christian. If there were no other way, yet still, for comfort and for joy, give me the life of one that loves the Christ, or strives to do so. There is a practical everyday application of the verse—

“Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live;
Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.”

Only that religion must not be of the common sort; it must not be a vain profession, but it must have for its root a hearty faith in Jesus Christ. See ye to it. Religion must be either everything or nothing, either first or nowhere. Make it the principal thing, and it will fill your soul with treasure.

Thus, you see, the farmer was right in having a principal crop, and in selecting the right seed to be his principal care. I do not suppose that he ever entered into any dispute upon the matter. He felt sure that wheat must be his principal produce, and he gave his thoughts to it. I cannot bear to hear people disputing as to whether it is worth while to give their heart to Christ. The people who question the value of faith have never tried it. Whenever you observe some conceited creature writing an essay against true religion, and putting it into one of our precious "reviews," do not be carried away by hearing people say that it is mightily clever. If you read it, say to yourself, "Certainly, this is a clever thing, for here is a blind man writing upon the harmony of colours; see what learned observations he makes upon scarlet and blue, which, he says, are precisely the same, only some narrow-minded folks insist upon their being different." You may regard the wise remarks of an unregenerate philosopher as a very fine essay by a deaf man, upon music. Can a horse write upon angels? He does not know anything about the subject, nor does the unrenewed man understand the regenerate man. He has not the powers and faculties that would enable him to know, for the carnal man knows not the things that be of God: they are spiritually discerned, and as he has no spirit he cannot discern them. Until he is born again he has no spiritual knowledge or judgment. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." "Ye must be born again." We are willing to take the evidence of scientific men upon the science that they have mastered; but we care nothing for their opinion upon a matter which is quite out of their range. Who shall tell me that there is no sweetness in honey? I do not accept the verdict of one who asserts it to be as tasteless as the white of an egg; but I wonder at the palate which can so deceive a man. Has a man lost the power of taste? What is his judgment worth? I put a piece of honeycomb into my mouth, and my experience of sweetness is a complete deliverance from all infidelity in that direction. When a man tells me that there is no sweetness in godliness, I smile for myself and drop a tear for him, and tasting yet more and more the deliciousness of godliness, I smile again to think that he should talk so fast about a thing of which he knows nothing. Oh, yes, we have made up our minds long ago; we are not going to argue about it any more: godliness is the principal wheat to us. We know it by experience. We have tasted and handled the good word of life. As the Eastern farmer was quite sure that the wheat was the principal thing, so are we quite sure of it, and henceforth, God helping us, we shall sow the principal wheat and leave others to sow tares or darnel if they will.

Thus have I said sufficient upon our first observation: the husbandman is a lesson to us because he knows what is the principal thing.

II. Secondly, he is a lesson to us because HE GIVES THIS PRINCIPAL THING THE PRINCIPAL PLACE. I find that the Hebrew is

rendered by some eminent scholars, "He puts the wheat into the principal place." That little handful of cummin, for the wife to flavour the cakes with, he grows in a corner; and the various herbs he plants in their proper borders. The barley he puts in its place, and the rye in its acre; but if there is a good bit of rich soil—the best he has—he says to his men, "That is for the wheat." The principal place is for the principal crop. He gives his choicest fields to that which is to be the main means of his living.

Now, here is a lesson for you and for me. Let us give to true godliness our principal powers and abilities. Let us give to the things of God our best, our ripest, our most careful, *our most intense thought*. I pray you, do not take religion at second hand from what I tell you, or somebody else tells you; but think it over, and give it your principal thoughts. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word of God. The thoughtful Christian is the growing Christian. Remember, the service of God deserves our very best consideration and endeavour. We are poor things at our best, but we ought to give the Lord nothing short of our principal powers. God would not have us serve him heedlessly, but he would have us use all the brain and intellect and mind that we have in studying and practising the things of God. "Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace." "Meditate upon these things. Give thyself wholly to them." If ever your mind is more clear and active at one time than at another, then sow the principal wheat of godly contemplation and gracious devotion. If you feel more fresh and more inclined to think at one time of the day than at another, let your whole mind at once go forth towards the best things.

Be sure, also, to yield to this subject *your most earnest love*. The best field in the little estate of manhood is not so much the intellect as the affections; sow the principal wheat there. Oh, to have true religion in the heart; to love what we know—intensely to love it; to hold it fast as with the grip of life and death—never to let it go! The Lord says, "My son, give me thy heart," and he will not be contented with anything less than our heart. When your zeal is most burning, and your love is most fervent, let the warmth and the fervency all go towards the Lord your God, and to the service of him who has redeemed you with his precious blood. Let the principal wheat have the principal part of your nature.

Towards God and his Christ also turn your strongest, and heartiest, and *most fervent desires*. When you enlarge your desire, desire Christ; when you become ambitious, let your ambition be all for God. Let your hunger and your thirst be after righteousness. Let your aspirations and your longings be all towards holiness, and the things that shall make you like to Christ. Give to this principal wheat your principal desires.

Then let the Lord have also always *the attentive respect of your life*. Let the principal wheat be sown in every action of life. I think if we are truly Christians we must, of necessity, be as much Christians outside the church as in it. We shall try to make our eating and our drinking, and everything we do, tend to the glory of God. Draw no line between the secular and the religious part of your conduct, but let the secular be made religious by a devout desire to glorify God in the

one as much as in the other. Let us worship God in the commonest duties of life, even as they do who stand before his throne and serve him day and night. Pray daily, "Thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven." Let us sow the principal wheat in all the fields of our life. May we each one feel, "For me to live is Christ." I cannot live without Christ, I would not live forgetting Christ, I could not live for anything but Christ. Let your whole nature yield to Jesus and to none else.

We should give to this principal wheat *our most earnest labours*; I mean for the spread of the gospel. A man ought to consecrate himself to the utmost in the matter of holy work for Jesus. I dread to see a professing man zealous in politics, and lukewarm in devotion; all on fire in the parish vestry, and chill as winter when he comes to a prayer-meeting. Some fly like eagles when they are serving the world, but they have a broken wing when they come into the worship of God. This should not be. If anything could rouse us up and make the lion within us roar in his strength, it should be when we confront the foes of Jesus, or fight for his cause. Our Lord's service is the principal wheat, let us labour most in connection with it. Lay all your talents under tribute to King Jesus. Nay, lay out your whole body, soul, and spirit for God, who is your all in all. Spend and be spent, that this highest, noblest object of your life may be achieved: if you spend all and win Christ you will be a glorious gainer.

This should also take possession of us so as to lead us to *our greatest sacrifices*. The love of Christ ought to be so strong as to swallow up self, and make sacrifice our daily joy. For Christ's name's sake we should be willing to endure poverty, reproach, slander, exile, death, and count them all joy. Nothing should be precious to a Christian in comparison with Christ, who is preciousness to them that believe. I will put it to you whether it is so with you or not. Is the love of Jesus the principal wheat with you? Are you giving your religion the chief place or not? I am afraid that some people treat religion as certain gentlemen treat a part of their estate. They have a farm away from their dwelling-house which they call an off-hand farm; they put a bailiff into it, and only give an eye to it now and then. Some people hold their religion as an off-hand farm, and their minister is the bailiff, who has to see to it for them. I am sure such spiritual farming never pays. They have religion? Certainly. Yes. Oh, certainly; yes. But I am afraid they are like the man of whom the child spoke at the Sunday school. "Is your father a Christian?" said the teacher. "Yes," said the child, "but he has not worked much at it lately." I could point out several of this sort, who are sowing their wheat very sparingly, and choosing the most barren patch to sow it in. They profess to be Christians, but religion is a tenth-rate article on their farm. Some have a large acreage for the world, and a poor little plot for Christ. They are great growers of worldly pleasure and self-indulgence, and they sow a little religion by the roadside for appearance sake. They spend more time at billiards than at prayers. This will not do. God will not thus be mocked. If we despise him and his truth we shall be lightly esteemed. O come let us give our principal time, talent, thought, effort that which is the chief concern of immortal spirits. May God help

us so to do. May we imitate the husbandman who gives the principal wheat the principal place in his farm.

III. Let us learn a third lesson. **THE HUSBANDMAN SELECTS THE PRINCIPAL WHEAT OR THE BEST SEED WHEN HE IS SOWING HIS FIELDS.** That is another meaning of the text, namely, when a farmer is setting aside wheat for sowing, he does not put by the tail corn and all the worst of his produce; but if he is a sensible man he likes to sow the best grains that he can meet with. Many farmers search the country round for a good sample of wheat for sowing, for they do not expect to get a good harvest out of a bad sowing. The husbandman is taught of God to put into the ground the principal wheat—the selected kernels. If I am going to sow to the Lord and to be a Christian, I should sow the purest form of our holy religion, and I should try to do this, first, *by believing the weightiest doctrines.* I would like to believe, not this ism, nor that, but the unadulterated truth which Jesus taught; for if I want to produce in my soul a holy character, it will come by the Spirit of God out of true doctrine. Falsehood always breeds sin: truth begets and fosters holiness. You and I, therefore, ought to pick over all our seed carefully, judge and decide between truth and error, and not let our soul receive anything but what is according to the word of the Lord. We ought to choose out the most important truths; for I have known people attach the chief importance to the smallest things, and this is an error in judgment. I know a denomination which has differences amongst itself such as no ordinary person could understand; but the members make no end of warfare over these minute differences: they even exclude one another for not being exclusive enough, and if by vehement effort they all reach one point of exclusiveness they spy out another hopeful reason for quarreling, and commence to exclude again. Some microscopic point of doctrine or ritual suffices for the creation of party upon party. They are like mercury: pour it on a table, and see how it divides into tiny globules: it splits and splits again. They, no doubt, are persons of great precision and discernment; but it were well if their tithing of mint and aniseed led them to attend to the weightier matters of brotherly love and Christian unity. They fight over the fitches, and leave the wheat to the crows. I am not at all of their mind. Those who will may dispute over vials and trumpets, I shall mainly preach the doctrine of the precious blood and the glorious truth of substitution and atonement. These doctrines are the principal wheat, and therefore these shall fall into our furrows.

Next to that, we ought to sow *the noblest examples.* Many men are dwarfed because they choose a bad model to start with. They imitate dear old Mr. So-and-so till they grow wonderfully like him, only the best of him is left out. One minister happens to be of a gloomy turn of mind, and he preaches the deep experience of the children of God, and in consequence a band of good people think it to be their duty to be melancholy. How unwise! We should never copy any man's infirmities. To be like Paul there is no need to have weak eyes; to be like Thomas there is no necessity to doubt; to be like Peter we need not be rash. If you copy any good man, there is a point at which you ought to stop short. Yet, if I must have a human model, I would like to have one of the bravest of the saints of God; but, oh, how much better

to imitate that perfect pattern which you have in Christ Jesus. Thus when you are sowing the wheat of holy living, sow the best seed you can, by having Christ Jesus himself as the example by which you shape your life.

We shall sow the best wheat by seeing that we have *the purest spirit*. Alas, how soon do spirits become soiled by self, or pride, or despondency, or sloth, or some other earthly taint. But what a grand thing it is to try and live to God in the spirit of Christ Jesus. May we be humble, lowly, bold, self-sacrificing, pure, chaste, and holy: this can only be produced by the Holy Ghost.

And, then, there is one more mode of sowing selected seed. We should endeavour to live in *the closest communion with God*. One dear brother prayed in our little meeting before the present service that we might have as much grace as we were capable of receiving, and that God would work in us all that he willed to work in us, and bring us into such a state that we might not hinder him in any good thing which he willed to do by us. This is to be our desire: we should rise to the highest form of spiritual life. If you do sow the principal wheat, get the best sort of wheat. There is religion and religion. There is a spirit and a spirit; and there is a system of divinity and another system of divinity. The best is always good enough for me. I exhort you not to rest content with anything short of the best that can be had. O young men, if you mean to follow Christianity, go in for it thoroughly. If you mean to serve the devil, serve him. He is a pretty master! Remember his wages! But if you wish to serve Christ, do not go sneaking through the world as if you were ashamed of your Lord. If you are Christ's, show yourself. If you are worthy of so great a captain, put on your regimentals. Rally to his banner, gather to his trumpet call, and then stand up, stand up for Jesus. If there is any manhood in you, this great cause calls for it all. Exhibit it, and may the Spirit of God help you so to do.

IV. Fourthly, THE HUSBANDMAN ATTENDS TO THE PRINCIPAL CROP WITH THE PRINCIPAL CARE. This Hebrew language always astonishes me, for it conveys such a mint of meaning. Sometimes when I study a verse I find that the critics say that it means this, that, and the other, until I have thought, "This language is miraculous, so full, so deep: very different from our poor English tongue. It teaches us many truths in a few words, and, like a diamond, it has a hundred facets, each flashing forth a distinct ray of light. This plenitude of meaning leads us to reflect upon a far more weighty matter. It is wonderful how much God can put into a word. Why, he put himself into one. The name of our divine Lord is "the Word of God."

Some critics insist upon it that the proper translation of our text is, that the farmer plants his wheat in rows. I do not know whether our farmers often *plant* wheat. They sow the seed in due order, but I do not hear much of planting it. It is said that the large crops in Palestine in old time were due to the fact that they planted the wheat, absolutely putting it in root by root, so that there might be no more wheat in a row than there ought to be, and they set it in lines so that it was not checked or suffocated by its being too thick in one place, neither was there any fear of its being too thin in another. The wheat was

planted, and then streams of water were turned by the foot to each particular plant of wheat. No wonder, therefore, that the land brought forth abundantly.

We give our principal care to the principal thing. Our godliness should be carried out with earnest thought: our service of God should be performed with great care. Brethren, are we careful enough as to our religious walk? Have you ever searched to the bottom of your profession? Have you ever enquired into the reason of your belonging to your present denomination? Why do you happen to be members of a certain church? Your mother was. Well, there is some good in that reason, but not enough to justify you in the sight of God. Why do you happen to profess, as you do, such and such a form of Christianity? Did you ever look into it? I do pray you judge your standing. If any Christian minister is afraid to urge you to this duty I should stand in doubt of him. I am not at all afraid. I wish you to examine all that I teach you. I beg you to do it, for I would not like to be responsible for another man's creed. Like the Bereans, search and see whether these things be according to Scripture or not. One of the greatest blessings that can come upon the church would be a searching spirit which would refer everything to the Holy Scriptures. If they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them; therefore try the spirits by this infallible test. In all things render service to God as carefully as the Eastern farmer planted his wheat. You serve a precise God, therefore be precise in his service. He is a jealous God, therefore be jealous of the least taint of error or mistake in anything that you do unto him.

Take care, also, that you nourish every part of your religion with prayer, even as the farmer watered each plant. Pray for grace from on high that your soul may never be parched and dried up. Perform to your faith, to your hope, to your love, and to all the graces that are in your soul every needful service which the husbandman renders to his wheat. Watch, weed, ward, and water every gracious principle: give your graces your principal care, for they are to yield your principal harvest.

V. With one more lesson I close. Do this, because FROM YOUR PRINCIPAL CARE YOU MAY EXPECT YOUR PRINCIPAL CROP. If religion be the principal thing, you may look to religion for your principal reward. The harvest will come to you in various ways. For instance, you will make the greatest success in life if you wholly live to the glory of God. Success or failure must much depend upon the suitability of the endeavour. I shall never be able to conduct a choir, but I may succeed in preaching, for that is my proper work. Now you, Christian man, if you try to live to the world you will not succeed, for you are not fitted for it. Grace has spoiled you for sin. If you live to God with all your heart you will succeed in it, for God has made you on purpose for a holy sphere. As he made the fish for the water, and the bird for the air, so he has made the believer for holiness, and for the service of God; and you will be out of your element, you will be a fish out of water, or a bird in the stream, if you leave the service of God. The Eastern farmer's prosperity hinges on his wheat, and yours upon devotion to God. It is to your faith and love that you must look

for your joy. Is there any bliss like the bliss of knowing that you are in Christ, and are the beloved of the Lord? It is to your religion that you must look for comfort on a sick and dying bed; and you may be there very soon. "Ay, and the sooner the better," you may say, if you have grown this principal wheat, and have sown to the Spirit that you may reap life everlasting.

In the world to come what a crop, what a harvest will come of serving the Lord! What will come out of all else? Nothing but vanity of vanity. A man has made a million of money, and he is dead. What is he the better for his gold? A warrior becomes an emperor, his fame rings throughout all the earth: he dies. What has he of all his honours? What will any of you have at the last if you live to the world? To live to the world is like playing with boys in the street for halfpence, or entertaining yourself as children do with bits of platter and oyster shells. A life devoted unto God yields real and substantial results, but all else is waste. Let us think so, and gird up our loins to serve the Lord. May the divine Spirit help us to sow the principal wheat, and live in joyful expectation of reaping a joyous harvest in due season, according to the promise, "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." That which was the cause of our principal anxiety here shall be the source of our endless felicity hereafter.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew vi. 19—34.

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BAPTISM—A BURIAL.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”—Romans vi. 3, 4.

I SHALL not enter into controversy over this text, although over it some have raised the question of infant baptism or believers' baptism, immersion or sprinkling. If any persons can give a consistent and instructive interpretation of the text, otherwise than by assuming believers' immersion to be Christian baptism, I should like to see them do it. I myself am quite incapable of performing such a feat, or even of imagining how it can be done. I am content to take the view that baptism signifies the burial of believers in water in the name of the Lord, and I shall so interpret the text. If any think not so, it may at least interest them to know what we understand to be the meaning of the baptismal rite, and I trust that they may think none the less of the spiritual sense because they differ as to the external sign. After all, the visible emblem is not the most prominent matter in the text. May God the Holy Spirit help us to reach its inner teaching.

I do not understand Paul to say that if improper persons, such as unbelievers, and hypocrites, and deceivers, are baptized they are baptized into our Lord's death. He says “so many of us,” putting himself with the rest of the children of God. He intends such as are entitled to baptism, and come to it with their hearts in a right state. Of them he says, “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” He does not even intend to say that those who were rightly baptized have all of them entered into the fulness of its spiritual meaning; for if they had, there would have been no need of the question, “Know ye not?” It would seem that some had been baptized who did not clearly know the meaning of their own baptism. They had faith, and a glimmer of knowledge sufficient to make them right recipients of baptism, but they were not well instructed in the teaching of baptism; perhaps they saw in it only a washing, but had never discerned the burial. I will go further, and say that I question if any of us yet know the fulness of the meaning of

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either of the ordinances which Christ has instituted. As yet we are, with regard to spiritual things, like children playing on the beach while the ocean rolls before us. At best we wade up to our ankles like our little ones on the sea shore. A few among us are learning to swim; but then we only swim where the bottom is almost within reach. Who among us has yet come to lose sight of shore and to swim in the Atlantic of divine love, where fathomless truth rolls underneath, and the infinite is all around? Oh, may God daily teach us more and more of what we already know in part, and may the truth which we have as yet but dimly perceived come to us in a brighter and clearer manner, till we see all things in clear sunlight. This can only be as our own character becomes more clear and pure; for we see according to what we are; and as is the eye such is that which it sees. The pure in heart alone can see a pure and holy God. We shall be like Jesus when we shall see him as he is, and certainly we shall never see him as he is till we are like him. In heavenly things we see as much as we have within ourselves. He who has eaten Christ's flesh and blood spiritually is the man who can see this in the sacred Supper, and he who has been baptized into Christ sees Christ in baptism. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundantly.

Baptism sets forth the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and our participation therein. Its teaching is twofold. First, think of *our representative union with Christ*, so that when he died and was buried it was on our behalf, and we were thus buried with him. This will give you the teaching of baptism so far as it sets forth a creed. We declare in baptism that we believe in the death of Jesus, and desire to partake in all the merit of it. But there is a second equally important matter, and that is *our realized union with Christ* which is set forth in baptism, not so much as a doctrine of our creed as a matter of our experience. There is a manner of dying, of being buried, of rising, and of living in Christ which must be displayed in each one of us if we are indeed members of the body of Christ.

I. First, then, I want you to think of **OUR REPRESENTATIVE UNION WITH CHRIST** as it is set forth in baptism as a truth to be believed. Our Lord Jesus is the substitute for his people, and when he died it was on their behalf and in their stead. The great doctrine of our justification lies in this, that Christ took our sins, stood in our place, and as our surety suffered, and bled, and died, thus presenting on our behalf a sacrifice for sin. We are to regard him, not as a private person, but as our representative. We are buried with him in baptism unto death to show that we accept him as being for us dead and buried.

Baptism as a burial with Christ signifies, first, *acceptance of the death and burial of Christ as being for us*. Let us do that at this very moment with all our hearts. What other hope have we? When our divine Lord came down from the heights of glory and took upon himself our manhood, he became one with you and with me; and being found in fashion as a man, it pleased the Father to lay sin upon him, even your sins and mine. Do you not accept that truth, and agree that the Lord Jesus should be the bearer of your guilt, and stand for you in the sight of God? "Amen! Amen!" say all of you. He went up to the tree loaded with all this guilt, and there he suffered in our room and stead

as we ought to have suffered. It pleased the Father, instead of bruising us, to bruise him. He put him to grief, making his soul an offering for sin. Do we not gladly accept Jesus as our substitute? O beloved, whether you have been baptized in water or not, I put this question to you, "Do you accept the Lord Jesus as your surety and substitute?" For if you do not, you shall bear your own guilt and carry your own sorrow, and stand in your own place beneath the glance of the angry justice of God. Many of us at this moment are saying in our inmost hearts—

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursed tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

Now, by being buried with Christ in baptism, we set our seal to the fact that the death of Christ was on our behalf, and that we were in him, and died in him, and, in token of our belief, we consent to the watery grave, and yield ourselves to be buried according to his command. This is a matter of fundamental faith—Christ dead and buried for us; in other words, substitution, suretiship, vicarious sacrifice. His death is the hinge of our confidence: we are not baptized into his example, or his life, but into his death. We hereby confess that all our salvation lies in the death of Jesus, which death we accept as having been incurred on our account.

But this is not all; because if I am to be buried, it should not be so much because I accept the substitutionary death of another for me as because I am dead myself. *Baptism is an acknowledgment of our own death in Christ.* Why should a living man be buried? Why should he even be buried because another died on his behalf? My burial with Christ means not only that he died for me, but that I died in him, so that my death with him needs a burial with him. Jesus died for us because he is one with us. The Lord Jesus Christ did not take his people's sins by an arbitrary choice of God; but it was most natural and fit and proper that he should take his people's sins, since they are his people, and he is their federal head. It behoved Christ to suffer for this reason—that he was the covenant representative of his people. He is the Head of the body, the Church; and if the members sinned, it was meet that the Head, though the Head had not sinned, should bear the consequence of the acts of the body. As there is a natural relationship between Adam and those that are in Adam, so is there between the second Adam and those that are in him. I accept what the first Adam did as my sin. Some of you may quarrel with it, and with the whole covenant dispensation, if you please; but as God has pleased to set it up, and I feel the effect of it, I see no use in my controverting it. As I accept the sin of father Adam, and feel that I sinned in him, even so with intense delight I accept the death and atoning sacrifice of my second Adam, and rejoice that in him I have died and risen again. I lived, I died, I kept the law, I satisfied justice in my covenant Head. Let me be buried in baptism that I may show to all around that I believe I was one with my Lord in his death and burial for sin.

Look at this, O child of God, and do not be afraid of it. These are

grand truths, but they are sure and comforting. You are getting among Atlantic billows now, but be not afraid. Realize the sanctifying effect of this truth. Suppose that a man had been condemned to die on account of a great crime; suppose, further, that he has actually died for that crime, and now, by some wonderful work of God, after having died he has been made to live again. He comes among men again as alive from the dead, and what ought to be the state of his mind with regard to his offence? Will he commit that crime again? A crime for which he has died? I say emphatically, God forbid. Rather should he say, "I have tasted the bitterness of this sin, and I am miraculously lifted up out of the death which it brought upon me, and made to live again: now will I hate the thing that slew me, and abhor it with all my soul." He who has received the wages of sin should learn to avoid it for the future. But you reply, "We never did die so; we were never made to suffer the due reward of our sins." Granted. But that which Christ did for you comes to the same thing, and the Lord looks upon it as the same thing. You are so one with Jesus, that you must regard his death as your death, his sufferings as the chastisement of your peace. You have died in the death of Jesus, and now by strange, mysterious grace you are brought up again from the pit of corruption unto newness of life. Can you, will you, go into sin again? You have seen what God thinks of sin: you perceive that he utterly loathes it; for when it was laid on his dear Son, he did not spare him, but put him to grief and smote him to death. Can you, after that, turn back to the accursed thing which God hates? Surely, the effect of the great grief of the Saviour upon your spirit must be sanctifying. How shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein? How shall we that have passed under its curse, and endured its awful penalty, tolerate its power? Shall we go back to this murderous, villainous, virulent, abominable evil? It cannot be. Grace forbids.

This doctrine is not the conclusion of the whole matter. The text describes us as *buried with a view to rising*. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death,"—for what object?—"that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Be buried in Christ! What for? That you may be dead for ever? No, but that now getting where Christ is, you may go where Christ goes. Behold him, then: he goes, first, into the sepulchre, but next out of the sepulchre; for when the third morning came he rose. If you are one with Christ at all, you must be one with him all through; you must be one with him in his death, and one with him in his burial, then you shall come to be one with him in his resurrection. Am I a dead man now? No, blessed be his name, it is written, "Because I live ye shall live also." True, I am dead in one sense, "For ye are dead"; but yet not dead in another, "For your life is hid with Christ in God"; and how is he absolutely dead who has a hidden life? No; since I am one with Christ I am what Christ is: as he is a living Christ, I am a living spirit. What a glorious thing it is to have arisen from the dead because Christ has given us life. Our old legal life has been taken from us by the sentence of the law, and the law views us as dead; but now we have received a new life, a life out of death, resurrection-life in Christ Jesus. The life

of the Christian is the life of Christ. Ours is not the life of the first creation, but of the new creation from among the dead. Now we live in newness of life, quickened unto holiness, and righteousness, and joy by the Spirit of God. The life of the flesh is a hindrance to us; our energy is in his Spirit. In the highest and best sense our life is spiritual and heavenly. This also is doctrine which is to be held most firmly.

I want you to see the force of this; for I am aiming at practical results this morning. If God has given to you and to me an entirely new life in Christ, how can that new life spend itself after the fashion of the old life? Shall the spiritual live as the carnal? How can you that were the servants of sin, but have been made free by precious blood, go back to your old slavery? When you were in the old Adam life, you lived in sin, and loved it; but now you have been dead and buried, and have come forth into newness of life: can it be that you can go back to the beggarly elements from which the Lord has brought you out? If you live in sin, you will be false to your profession, for you profess to be alive unto God? If you walk in just, you will tread under foot the blessed doctrines of the Word of God, for these lead to holiness and purity. You would make Christianity to be a by-word and a proverb, if, after all, you who were quickened from your spiritual death should exhibit a conduct no better than the life of ordinary men, and little superior to what your former life used to be. As many of you as have been baptized have said to the world,—We are dead to the world, and we have come forth into a new life. Our fleshly desires are henceforth to be viewed as dead, for now we live after a fresh order of things. The Holy Spirit has wrought in us a new nature, and though we are in the world, we are not of it, but are new-made men, "created anew in Christ Jesus." This is the doctrine which we avow to all mankind, that Christ died and rose again, and that his people died and rose again in him. Out of this doctrine grows death unto sin and life unto God, and we wish by every action and every movement of our lives to teach it to all who see us.

So far the doctrine: is it not a precious one indeed? Oh, if you be indeed one with Christ, shall the world find you polluting yourselves? Shall the members of a generous, gracious Head be covetous and grasping? Shall the members of a glorious, pure, and perfect Head be defiled with the lusts of the flesh and the follies of a vain life? If believers are indeed so identified with Christ that they are his fulness, should they not be holiness itself? If we live by virtue of our union with his body, how can we live as other Gentiles do? How is it that so many professors exhibit a mere worldly life, living for business and for pleasure, but not for God, in God, or with God? They sprinkle a little religion on a worldly life, and so hope to Christianize it. But it will not do. I am bound to live as Christ would have lived under my circumstances; in my private chamber or in my public pulpit, I am bound to be what Christ would have been in like case. I am bound to prove to men that union to Christ is no fiction, or fanatical sentiment; but that we are swayed by the same principles and actuated by the same motives.

Baptism is thus an embodied creed, and you may read it in these words: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with

him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead."

II. But, secondly, A REALIZED UNION WITH CHRIST is also set forth in baptism, and this is rather a matter of experience than of doctrine.

1. First, there is, as a matter of actual experience in the true believer, *death*. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" It must be contrary to all law to bury those who are yet alive. Until they are dead, men can have no right to be buried. Very well, then, the Christian is dead,—dead, first, *to the dominion of sin*. Whenever sin called him aforetime he answered, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." Sin ruled his members, and if sin said, "Do this," he did it, like the soldiers obedient to their centurion; for sin ruled over all the parts of his nature, and exercised over him a supreme tyranny. Grace has changed all this. When we are converted we become dead to the dominion of sin. If sin calls us now, we refuse to come, for we are dead. If sin commands us we will not obey, for we are dead to its authority. Sin comes to us now—oh, that it did not,—and it finds in us the old corruption which is crucified, but not yet dead; but it has no dominion over our true life. Blessed be God, sin cannot reign over us, though it may assail us and work us harm. "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace." We sin, but not with allowance. With what grief we look back upon our transgressions! How earnestly do we endeavour to avoid them! Sin tries to maintain its usurped power over us; but we do not acknowledge it as our sovereign. Evil enters us now as an interloper and a stranger, and works sad havoc, but it does not abide in us upon the throne; it is an alien, and despised, and no more honoured and delighted in. We are dead to the reigning power of sin.

The believer, if spiritually buried with Christ, is *dead to the desire of any such power*. "What!" say you, "do not godly men have sinful desires?" Alas, they do. The old nature that is in them lusteth towards sin; but the true man, the real *ego*, desires to be purged of every speck or trace of evil. The law in the members would fain urge to sin, but the life in the heart constrains to holiness. I can honestly say, for my own self, that the deepest desire of my soul is to live a perfect life. If I could have my own best desire, I would never sin again; and though, alas, I do consent to sin so that I become responsible when I transgress, yet my innermost self loathes iniquity. Sin is my bondage, not my pleasure; my misery, not my delight; at the thought of it I cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" In our heart of hearts our spirit cleaves steadfastly to that which is good, and true, and heavenly, so that the real man delights in the law of God, and follows hard after goodness. The main current and true bent of our soul's wish and will is not towards sin, and the apostle taught us no mere fancy when he said, "For he that is dead is freed from sin."

Moreover, in the next place we are dead *as to the pursuits and aims of the sinning and ungodly life*. Brethren, are any of you that profess to be God's servants living for yourselves? Then you are not God's servants; for he that is really born again lives unto God: the object of his life is the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men. This is the prize that is set before the quickened man, and towards this he runs.

“I do not run that way,” says one. Very well, then you will not come to the desired end. If you are running after the pleasures of the world or the riches of it, you may win the prize you run for, but you cannot win “the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.” I hope that many of us can honestly say that we are now dead to every object in life, except the glory of God in Christ Jesus. We are in the world, and have to live as other men do, carrying on our ordinary business; but all this is subordinate, and held in as with bit and bridle; our aims are above yon changeful moon. The flight of our soul, like that of an eagle, is above these clouds: though that bird of the sun alights upon the rock, or even descends to the plain, yet its joy is to dwell above, out-soaring the lightning, rising over the black head of the tempest, and looking down upon all earthly things. Henceforth our grace-given life speeds onward and upward; we are not of the world, and the world's engagements are not those upon which we spend our noblest powers.

Again, we are dead in this sense, that we are dead to *the guidance of sin*. The lust of the flesh drives a man this way and that way. He steers his course by the question, “What is most pleasant? What will give me most present gratification?” The way of the ungodly is mapped out by the hand of selfish desire: but you that are true Christians have another guide, you are led by the Spirit in a right way. You ask, “What is good and what is acceptable in the sight of the Most High?” Your daily prayer is, “Lord, show me what thou wouldst have me to do?” You are alive to the teachings of the Spirit, who will lead you into all truth; but you are deaf, yea, dead to the dogmas of carnal wisdom, the oppositions of philosophy, the errors of proud human wisdom. Blind guides who fall with their victims into the ditch are shunned by you, for you have chosen the way of the Lord. What a blessed state of heart this is! I trust, my brethren, that we have fully realized it! We know the Shepherd's voice, and a stranger we will not follow. One is our teacher, and we submit our understandings to his infallible instruction.

Our text must have had a very forcible meaning among the Romans in Paul's time, for they were sunk in all manner of odious vices. Take an average Roman of that period, and you would have found in him a man accustomed to spend a large part of his time in the amphitheatre, hardened by the brutal sight of bloody shows, in which gladiators slew each other to amuse a holiday crowd. Taught in such a school, the Roman was cruel to the last degree, and withal ferocious in the indulgence of his passions. A depraved man was not regarded as being at all degraded; not only nobles and emperors were monsters of vice, but the public teachers were impure. When those who were regarded as moral were corrupt, you may imagine what the immoral were. “Enjoy yourself; follow after the pleasures of the flesh,” was the rule of the age. Christianity was the introduction of a new element. See here a Roman converted by the grace of God! What a change is in him! His neighbours say, “You were not at the amphitheatre this morning. How could you miss the sight of the hundred Germans who tore out each other's bowels?” “No,” he says, “I was not there; I could not bear to be there. I am totally dead to it. If you were to force me to be there, I must shut my eyes, for I could not look on murder committed

in sport!" The Christian did not resort to places of licentiousness; he was as good as dead to such filthiness. The fashions and customs of the age were such that Christians could not consent to them, and so they became dead to society. It was not merely that Christians did not go into open sin, but they spoke of it with horror, and their lives rebuked it. Things which the multitude counted a joy, and talked of exultingly, gave no comfort to the follower of Jesus, for he was dead to such evils. This is our solemn avowal when we come forward to be baptized. We say by acts which are louder than words that we are dead to those things in which sinners take delight, and we wish to be so accounted.

2. The next thought in baptism is *burial*. Death comes first, and burial follows. Now, what is burial, brethren? Burial is, first of all, *the seal of death*; it is the certificate of decease. "Is such a man dead?" say you. Another answers, "Why, dear sir, he was buried a year ago." You ask no more whether he is dead when you know that he is buried. There have been instances of persons being buried alive, and I am afraid that the thing happens with sad frequency in baptism, but it is unnatural, and by no means the rule. I fear that many have been buried alive in baptism, and have therefore risen and walked out of the grave just as they were. But if burial is true, it is a certificate of death. If I am able to say in very truth, "I was buried with Christ thirty years ago," I must surely be dead. Certainly the world thought so, for not long after my burial with Jesus I began to preach his name, and by that time the world thought me very far gone, and said, "He stinketh." They began to say all manner of evil against the preacher; but the more I stank in their nostrils the better I liked it, for the surer I was that I was really dead to the world. It is good for a Christian to be offensive to wicked men. See how our Master stank in the esteem of the godless when they cried, "Away with him, away with him!" Though no corruption could come near his blessed body, yet his perfect character was not savoured by that perverse generation. There must, then, be in us death to the world, and some of the effects of death, or our baptism is void. As burial is the certificate of death, so is burial with Christ the seal of our mortification to the world.

But burial is, next, *the displaying of death*. While the man is indoors the passers-by do not know that he is dead; but when the funeral takes place, and he is carried through the streets, everybody knows that he is dead. This is what baptism ought to be. The believer's death to sin is at first a secret, but by an open confession he bids all men know that he is dead with Christ. Baptism is the funeral rite by which death to sin is openly set forth before all men.

Next, burial is *the separateness of death*. The dead man no longer remains in the house, but is placed apart as one who ceases to be numbered with the living. A corpse is not welcome company. Even the most beloved object after a while cannot be tolerated when death has done his work upon it. Even Abraham, who had been so long united with his beloved Sarah, is heard to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Such is the believer when his death to the world is fully known: he is poor company for worldlings, and they shun him as a damper upon their revelry. The true saint is put into the separated class with Christ, according to his word, "If they have persecuted me, they will also

persecute you." The saint is put away in the same grave as his Lord; for as he was, so are we also in this world. He is shut up by the world in the one cemetery of the faithful, if I may so call it, where all that are in Christ are dead to the world together, with this epitaph for them all, "And ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

And the grave is the place—I do not know where to get a word—of the *settledness of death*; for when a man is dead and buried you never expect to see him come home again: so far as this world is concerned, death and burial are irrevocable. They tell me that spirits walk the earth, and we have all read in the newspaper "The Truth about Ghosts," but I have my doubts on the subject. In spiritual things, however, I am afraid that some are not so buried with Christ but what they walk a great deal among the tombs. I am grieved at heart that it should be so. The man in Christ cannot walk as a ghost, because he is alive somewhere else; he has received a new being, and therefore he cannot mutter and peep among the dead hypocrites around him. See what our chapter saith about our Lord: "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." If we have been once raised from dead works we shall never go back to them again. I may sin, but sin can never have dominion over me; I may be a transgressor and wander much from my God, but never can I go back to the old death again. When my Lord's grace got hold of me, and buried me, he wrought in my soul the conviction that henceforth and for ever I was to the world a dead man. I am right glad that I made no compromise, but came right out. I have drawn the sword, and thrown away the scabbard. Tell the world they need not try to fetch us back, for we are spoiled for them as much as if we were dead. All they could have would be our carcasses. Tell the world not to tempt us any longer, for our hearts are changed. Sin may charm the old man who hangs there upon the cross, and he may turn his leering eye that way, but he cannot follow up his glance, for he cannot get down from the cross: the Lord has taken care to use the mallet well, and he has fastened his hands and feet right firmly, so that the crucified flesh must still remain in the place of doom and death. Yet the true, the genuine life within us cannot die, for it is born of God; neither can it abide in the tombs, for its call is to purity and joy and liberty; and to that call it yields itself.

3. We have come as far as death and burial; but baptism, according to the text, represents also *resurrection*: "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Now, notice that the man who is dead in Christ, and buried in Christ, is also raised in Christ, and this is a *special work upon him*. All the dead are not raised, but our Lord himself is "the firstfruits of them that slept." He is the First-begotten from among the dead. Resurrection was a special work upon the body of Christ by which he was raised up, and that work, begun upon the Head, will continue till all the members partake of it, for—

"Though our inbred sins require
Our flesh to see the dust;
Yet as the Lord our Saviour rose,
So all his followers must."

As to our soul and spirit, the resurrection has begun upon us. It has not come to our bodies yet, but it will be given to them at the appointed day. For the present a special work has been wrought upon us by which we have been raised up from among the dead. Brethren, if you had been dead and buried, and had been lying one night, say, in Woking Cemetery, and if a divine voice had called you right up from the grave when the silent stars were shining on the open heath—if, I say, you had risen right out from the green mound of turf, what a lonely being you would have been in the vast cemetery amid the stilly night! How you would sit down on the grave and wait for morning! That is very much your condition with regard to the present evil world. You were once like the rest of the sinners around you, dead in sin, and sleeping in the grave of evil custom. The Lord by his power has called you out of your grave, and now you are alive in the midst of death. There can be no fellowship here for you; for what communion have the living with the dead? The man out there in the cemetery just quickened would find none among all the dead around him with whom he could converse, and you can find no companions in this world. There lies a skull, but it sees not from the eyeholes; neither is there speech in its grim mouth. I see a mass of bones lying in your corner: the living one looks at them, but they cannot hear or speak. Imagine yourself there. All that you would say to the bones would be to ask, "Can these dry bones live?" You would be a foreigner in that home of corruption, and you would haste to get away. That is your condition in the world: God has raised you up from among the dead, from out of the company among whom you had your former conversation. Now, I pray you, do not go and scratch into the earth, to tear up the graves to find a friend there. Who would rend open a coffin and cry, "Come, you must drink with me! You must go to the theatre with me"? No, we dread the idea of association with the dead, and I tremble when I see a professor trying to have communion with worldly men. "Come ye out from among them; be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing." You know what would happen to you if you were thus raised, and were forced to sit close to a dead body newly taken from the grave. You would cry, "I cannot bear it; I cannot endure it"; you would get to the wind side of the horrid corpse. So with a man that is really alive unto God: deeds of injustice, oppression, or unchastity he cannot endure; for life loathes corruption.

Notice that, as we are raised up by a special work from among the dead, that rising is *by divine power*. Christ is brought again "from the dead by the glory of the Father." What means that? Why did it not say, "by the power of the Father"? Ah, beloved, glory is a grander word; for all the attributes of God are displayed in all their solemn pomp in the raising of Christ from the dead. There was the Lord's faithfulness; for had he not declared that his soul should not rest in hell, neither should his Holy One see corruption? Was not the love of the Father seen there? I am sure it was a delight to the heart of God to bring back life to the body of his dear Son. And so, when you and I are raised out of our death in sin, it is not merely God's power, it is not merely God's wisdom that is seen, it is "the glory of the

Father." Oh, to think that every child of God that has been quickened has been quickened by "the glory of the Father." It has taken not alone the Holy Spirit, and the work of Jesus, and the work of the Father, but the very "glory of the Father." If the tiniest spark of spiritual life has to be created by "the glory of the Father," what will be the glory of that life when it comes into its full perfection, and we shall be like Christ, and see him as he is! O beloved, value highly the new life which God has given you. Think of it as making you richer than if you had a sea of pearls, greater than if you were descended from the loftiest of princes. There is in you that which it required all the attributes of God to create. He could make a world by power alone, but you must be raised from the dead by "the glory of the Father."

Notice next, that this life *is entirely new*. We are to "walk in newness of life." The life of a Christian is an entirely different thing from the life of other men, entirely different from his own life before his conversion, and when people try to counterfeit it, they cannot accomplish the task. A person writes you a letter and wants to make you think he is a believer, but within about half-a-dozen sentences there occurs a line which betrays the imposture. The hypocrite has very nearly copied our expressions, but not quite. There is a freemasonry among us, and the outside world watch us a bit, and by-and-by they pick up certain of our signs; but there is a private sign which they can never imitate, and therefore at a certain point they break down. A godless man may pray as much as a Christian, read as much of the Bible as a Christian, and even go beyond us in externals; but there is a secret which he knows not and cannot counterfeit. The life divine is so totally new that the unconverted have no copy to work by. In every Christian it is as new as if he were the very first Christian. Even though in every one it is the image and superscription of Christ, yet there is a milled edge or a something about the real silver that these counterfeits cannot get a hold of. It is a new, a novel, a fresh, a divine thing.

And, lastly, this life *is an active thing*. I have often wished that Paul had not been so fast when I have been reading him. His style travels in seven-leagued boots. He does not write like an ordinary man. I beg to tell him that if he had written this text according to proper order, it should run, "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should be raised from the dead." But see; Paul has got over ever so much ground while we are talking: he has reached to "walking." The walking includes the living, of which it is the sign, and Paul thinks so fast when the Spirit of God is upon him that he has passed beyond the cause to the effect. No sooner do we get the new life than we become active: we do not sit down and say, "I have received a new life: how grateful I ought to be. I will quietly enjoy myself." Oh dear, no. We have something to do directly we are alive, and we begin walking, and so the Lord keeps us all our lives in his work; he does not allow us to sit down contented with the mere fact that we live, nor does he allow us to spend all our time in examining whether we are alive or no; but he gives us one battle to fight, and then another; he gives us his house to build, his farm to till, his children to nurse, and his sheep to feed. At times we have fierce struggles

with our own spirit, and fears lest sin and Satan should prevail, till our life is scarce discerned by itself, but it is always discerned by its acts. The life that is given to those who were dead with Christ is an energetic, forceful life, that is evermore busy for Christ, and would, if it could, move heaven and earth and subdue all things unto him who is its Head.

This life Paul tells us is *an unending one*. Once get it, and it will never go from you. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

Next, it is a life which is *not under the law or under sin*. Christ came under the law when he was here, and he had our sin laid on him, and therefore died; but after he rose again there was no sin laid on him. In his resurrection both the sinner and the Surety are free. What had Christ to do after his rising? To bear any more sin? No, but just to live unto God. That is where you and I are. We have no sin to carry now; it was all laid on Christ. What have we to do? Every time we have the headache, or feel ill, are we to cry out, "This is a punishment for my sin"? Nothing of the kind. Our punishment is all done with, for we have borne the capital sentence, and are dead: our new life must be unto God.

"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."

I have now to serve him and delight myself in him, and use the power which he gives me of calling others from the dead, saying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life." I am not going back to the grave of spiritual death nor to my grave-clothes of sin; but by divine grace I will still believe in Jesus, and go from strength to strength, not under law, not fearing hell, nor hoping to merit heaven, but as a new creature, loving because loved, living for Christ because Christ lives in me, rejoicing in glorious hope of that which is yet to be revealed by virtue of my oneness in Christ.

Poor sinner, you do not know anything about this death and burial, and you never will till you have power to become sons of God, and that he gives to as many as believe on his name. Believe on his name, and it is all yours. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans vi.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—775, 762, 646.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TILL WE MEET AGAIN.

A Sermon

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."—Revelation xxii. 21.

THE first saints could never be long without speaking of their Lord and Saviour. He filled their hearts, and therefore they must needs speak of him. How ingeniously they bring him in! When they commence an epistle the salutation will be sure to bear his name. When they are in the midst of a letter, they lay down their pen and offer a prayer; and when they begin again it is with a benediction in which his name is prominent, or with a doxology ascribing glory unto him, with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost. John's Book of Revelation is full of Christ. Its opening verse rings out the precious name, and the closing line which is now before us repeats the heavenly music. Is not the Lord Jesus the sum and substance, the glory of every vision seen in Patmos? May I not say of the Apocalypse, as John said of the New Jerusalem, "the Lamb is the light thereof"? until he looses the seals and opens the roll, the book of John's prophecy is so folded up that no man shall understand it.

John could not finish his book without mentioning that name which was dearest of all names to him. As he puts aside his pen to write no more, he concludes with an invocation of blessing upon all the saints in every place; and this is the form of it: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Paul is thought to have claimed the use of this benediction as his particular token: "in every epistle so I write." I am not sure that it is so, for I suspect that the apostle referred to his own large handwriting, and to the signature which he put to his letters. But still, according to many interpreters, Paul used this particular blessing as his private mark, the seal of the authenticity of a letter. See the end of the epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Certainly Paul used the words often; but, perhaps, when Paul had been taken up, John deemed it right to adopt Paul's motto, and with it to set, as it were, his stamp and seal upon the last book of Revelation. It was a benediction which could not be engrossed by any one apostle, nor

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indeed by all the apostles put together. Paul made it his own, but John had equal right to use it; and it is now all the dearer to us because both these mighties employed it.

Brethren, the benediction before us is not only Paul's word and John's word, and the Bible's last word, but it is now the chosen word of all the ministers of Jesus Christ. Is not this the benediction with which we dismiss the faithful: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all"? So shall it remain until the Lord shall come a second time. It is an expression suitable to the most gracious heart, a prayer wherewith the believer may vent his best wishes and express his most devout desires. Over you all at this time, in my own most humble but sincere manner, I would pronounce the benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

If the Spirit shall help me, I would at this time first say, let us consider this benediction; and then, secondly, let us consider its peculiar position; for something can be learned therefrom.

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS BENEDICTION. It divides itself into three parts, under these heads,—What? How? and, To whom?

1. *What?* What is this which John desires when he says,—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all”?

The word is *Charis*. I do not think any better translation could be given than “grace”: it is usually translated grace throughout the New Testament. Those who understand the Greek language thoroughly tell us that it has for its root “joy.” There is joy at the bottom of *Charis*, or grace. It also signifieth favour, kindness, and especially love; and I might, without violating the meaning of the Spirit, read the words thus: “The love of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” But inasmuch as love to unworthy creatures such as we are can only display itself in free favour—that is, grace, and we know that the term used is an accurate expression, we will let it stand as it is, only putting in a drop or two of the sweet honey of the love which lies within it. John desires that we may have the free favour of Jesus Christ, the love of Jesus Christ, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ himself is generally mentioned in our benedictions as having grace, and the Father as having love; and our usual benediction begins with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God. Is that the proper order? Should we not rather say the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Brethren, the order observed in the benediction is that of our experience, the order in which we learn, the order in which we receive. We first receive the grace and free favour which are in Christ Jesus, and then from these we learn the love of the Father; for no man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus Christ. The order is correct to our experience, and in an instructive benediction the Holy Spirit intendeth this for our learning.

The Father's love is, as it were, the secret, mysterious germ of everything. That same love in Jesus Christ is grace; his is love in its active form, love descending to earth, love wearing human nature, love paying the great ransom price, love ascending, love sitting and love pleading, love soon to come with power and glory.

The eternal love which, as it were, did lie in the bosom of the Father, rises up and comes into activity, and is then called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the grace of a divine person. We wish you, brethren, as we wish for ourselves, the grace of God himself, rich, boundless, unfathomable, immutable, divine; no temporary grace such as some speak of, which keepeth not its own, but suffereth even the sheep of its own pasture to go astray and perish; but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it is written, "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end"; that grace most potent which said, "None shall pluck them out of my hand." We wish this grace to be with you, the grace which loved you or ever the earth was made,—“I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee”; the grace which will be with you when this poor world shall have melted back into the nothingness from whence it sprang: infinite, everlasting, unchanging grace—we wish you may have that. May its divine height, and depth, and length, and breadth be enjoyed by you; may you know the loving grace of Christ which passeth knowledge; may you grasp the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is no small treasure,—this grace of a divine person.

Yet is our Lord Jesus also human, as truly human as he is divine, and, believing in him, you have the grace of Jesus Christ the man to be with you all. May you feel his tenderness, his brotherliness, his grace. He is your kinsman, and he graciously favours his own kinsfolk. The man is next of kin unto us, and as Ruth enjoyed all the love of Boaz, so may you possess all the heart of Jesus. May he redeem your inheritance for you, and take you to himself to be his own, in blessed union with himself for ever. May the grace of the Man of Nazareth, the grace of the Son of Mary be with you, as well as the grace of "God over all, blessed for ever," to whom be praise. The grace of that wondrous person who is God and man in one person, and whom we call Lord, is now solemnly invoked upon you.

Read the text again, and pause a while in the middle to enjoy "The grace of our Lord." Whatever familiarity we have with him, we call him Master and Lord, and he saith, "Ye do well, for so I am." Let us never forget that. The grace that cometh from his majesty, the grace that cometh from his headship, the grace that cometh from his divinely human supremacy over his church, which is his body—this is the grace which we desire for you all.

Read the next word, "the grace of our Lord *Jesus*": may that be with you; that is to say, the grace of our Saviour, for that is the meaning of the word Jesus. All his saving grace, all that which redeems from guilt, from sin, from trouble, all that which saves us with an everlasting salvation,—may that be yours to the full.

Then comes the other word, "the grace of our Lord Jesus *Christ* be with you"; may he, as the Anointed One, visit you. May the grace of his anointing be with you, may the holy anointing which was poured upon the Head come down upon you, as the sacred nard dropped from Aaron's beard and perfumed all his robes. May you have that anointing from the Holy One which shall make you know all things.

I am tempted to linger over each one of these words, but I may not, for time would forbid. Yet must we tarry on that word "our." "May the grace of *our* Lord." Catch at that sweet word. It may not perhaps be genuine in this case, for it is not in the Sinaitic manuscript, but whether it is so in this particular instance or not, it is in the Word, and stands for ever true. Jesus is *our* Lord,—*our* Lord Jesus Christ: both yours and ours. May the fulness of his grace be with you and with us.

2. Our next division is *How?* "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What meaneth this? Our first answer is the wish that the grace of our Lord may rest upon you *as a matter of fact*,—that he may love you truly and intensely; love you, not only as he loves the world, but as he loved his own which were in the world. May you have his redemption, not as a general thing, but according to that word, "He hath redeemed us from among men out of every kindred." May you have the special, peculiar love which Christ hath to those whom his Father gave him, whose names are on his breast-plate, and for whom he has paid an effectual ransom price, that they thereby might be delivered: may such grace be with you. As a matter of fact may it rest upon you as the chosen, adopted, called, and sanctified.

Next, *may you believe that grace*, may you trust that grace, may it be with you because your faith has closed in with it, and you are relying upon it. You believe that Jesus loves you; you believe in his grace, and trust yourself to him, committing your spirit to the keeping of that hand which was pierced and fastened to the cross for you. May his grace be with you in that sense, so that you realize it.

Still further, may his grace be with you *as the object of faith*, so that your belief comes to be full assurance, till you know the love which Christ hath towards you, and no more doubt it than you doubt the love of the dearest friend you have on earth. May his love be a present fact, and not a thing to be questioned, a treasure in which you glory in the secret places of your soul, saying, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." May his grace be with you in the sense that you are confidently assured of it.

And may his grace be with you, next, *as to the favours which flow out of it*. May you enjoy all the blessings which the grace of Christ can yield, the grace of a peaceful conscience, the grace of a cleansed walk, the grace of access to God, the grace of fervent love, the grace of holy expectancy, the grace of self-denial, the grace of perfect consecration, and the grace of final perseverance. May the fountain and well-head be with you, that so the sparkling streams may flow at your feet.

And may grace be with us, next, so as *to produce constant communion between us and Christ*, his favour flowing into our heart, and our hearts returning their gratitude. Oh, to carry on blessed commerce with Christ, exchanging weakness for strength, sin for righteousness, and trust for care. O to give love for love and heart for heart, till my best love loves me, and my best love is all his own. Oh, to come to this pass, that our Well-beloved is with us, and we enjoy sweet mutual intercourse: this is to have the love, or grace, of Jesus with us.

May our Lord Jesus Christ thus in his grace be with us, and may

he *work for us all that he can work*. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, brethren, when you desire to pray; then may the great High Priest intercede for you. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, so that when you are downcast he may say, "Let not your heart be troubled." May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you to check you when you are likely to start aside, to guide you when you know not your way, to inspire you when you are ready to be cast down, to confirm you when you have almost slipped with your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you when heart and flesh are failing you, when the last hour has come, and you are about to appear before God. God grant you to know always all that Christ can do in you, and for you, and with you, and by you. What better benediction could John himself utter?

3. But, now, the third part of our discourse comes under the head of "*to whom*." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you *all*." Surely if we were to take this in the widest possible sense, and say—may it be with you all, it could not be wrong to wish that all should have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with them; yet I know some sound brethren are very jealous of anything that looks like a wide expression, an expression which would wish good to all. For my own part, I do not understand the nature of the orthodoxy which would limit benevolent desires. I should like to be more and more heterodox in the direction of desiring good to all that come in my way. Would to God that the best that could happen to all men did happen to them. I would without the slightest hypocrisy breathe this desire over all mankind, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Still, there is no doubt that the connection in which it stands, and also certain versions of it, do confine this benediction to the saints, and practically it must always be confined to them, for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is only known and enjoyed by those who have given their hearts to Jesus, and are living by him, in him, and to him. Let us wish the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to all the saints, at any rate. Some of the saints will hardly own us; but may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them. They would not let us preach in their pulpits; but may grace be with them. They would not partake of the communion with us; but may grace be with them. They call us sectarians and schismatics, but may "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them all. Amen," with every one of them, whoever they may be. If they are in Jesus Christ, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with them. Every now and then you come across a book written by one who is a long way off from understanding all the truth, yet he knows Jesus Christ, and as you read the sweet words that come from his pen concerning the Master you feel your heart knit to him. Your soul feels that it is a pity that the writer was a High Churchman, but if he loves the Lord Jesus Christ we forget his errors, and are delighted with the life of Jesus which we see in him. If a man knows Christ, he knows the most important of matters, and is possessed of a secret quite as precious as any in our own keeping, for what know we more than Christ, and what hope have we but in Christ? If thou lovest Christ, give me thy hand, my friend, notwithstanding thy blunders. If Christ be all thy trust and all thy confidence, I am sorry for thine eyes that thou canst not see a great deal

more, I am sorry for thine head that thou canst not think more straight, but thine heart is in the right place resting on Jesus, reposing on him, and who am I that I should judge thee? There is a life in Christ which a thousand errors cannot kill. There is a life which is the same in all that have it, however diverse they may happen to be upon opinion or outward ceremony. There is a life eternal, and that life is Christ Jesus, and to all that have that life we do with intensity of heart say, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

I notice Paul says this in one of his epistles to a church that misbehaved itself dreadfully. It was one of the churches that would not have any minister; a church where they all spoke as they pleased, to whom Paul said, "God is not the author of confusion." They were so depraved a church that they allowed an incestuous person to be present at the communion, but still, after the apostle had rebuked them, he said, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Even so must we say to those who err ignorantly, as the Corinthians did. If we differ from brethren, if we have to rebuke them, if sometimes they also rebuke us, and show temper over it, yet may this be the finale of it all, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Should we not wish the highest degree of grace to all who are in the body of Christ? Let us not utter this benediction merely because we ought to say it, but because we delight to say it: let us not only wish well to the saints because we are bound to wish them well, but because our hearts cannot do otherwise.

II. So now, not to detain you much longer, I ask your earnest attention for a few minutes to THE POSITION OF THIS BENEDICTION.

First, I draw what I have to say from the fact that *it is the last word of Scripture*. I regard it, therefore, as being the apostle's last and highest wish. We are glad to find that, while the Old Testament finishes with a curse—"Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse," the New Testament concludes with a blessing, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all": as if to show that the very life and spirit of a Christian should be blessing; and this should be to us our last and highest wish for men—that they may receive and retain the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I wish this blessing to you all, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever you may miss, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. In whatsoever points you or any of us may fail, may we never come short of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. What if the preacher should preach to others, and himself be a castaway! Pray that it be not so. What if a deacon or elder should lead the flock of Christ, and yet the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with him! He would become another Judas or Demas. That would be dreadful. What if you should teach the little ones in the school, and yet not learn yourselves! It would be a sad thing to have come to the Lord's Supper, and yet never to have eaten his flesh and drunk his blood: to be immersed in water, but never to have known the baptism of the Holy Spirit, nor to have been baptized into Christ with the spiritual baptism. What a thing it will be, if, after all our professions, and all our labours, and all our teachings, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ should not be with us. I pray, brethren, whatever other prayer may not be granted, that this may be,

concerning every member of this church, and every member of every church of Jesus Christ, that at any rate the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us. We cannot do with less than this, and we do not want more than this. If we get grace from Jesus we shall have glory with Jesus, but without it we are without hope.

Standing at *the end of the Book of Revelation* as this does, I next regard its position as indicating what we shall want till the end comes; that is, from now till the descent of our Lord in his second advent. This is the one thing we require, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." May it be with us daily, hourly! May it be with us, instructing us as to our behaviour in each generation! May it be with us cleansing us from all sin; enabling us to walk in the light as he is in the light! May it be with us, strengthening us to carry our daily burdens, and to bear our witness for his name under the varying circumstances of the ages. May it be with us counselling us when the trials of life distract us! With us transfiguring us from glory to glory, till we shall bear the image of Jesus Christ? May it be with us all-sufficiently! Hath he not said, "My grace is sufficient for thee"? May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all in every way in which you shall require it till he cometh! He can furnish you with the whole armour of God; he can equip you with all the necessaries of the pilgrim life. For our labour as gospel-fishermen he supplies all the nets that we shall require, for our work in his vineyard he gives us every tool. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us, and we shall be swift of foot as a young roe, and sure of foot as the hart on the mountain side, that slips not, however slippery the crags may be. Only let Christ be with us and we are complete in him; perfect in Christ Jesus. All the equipment that men shall want between earth and heaven to fight against hell, and to trample on the world, and to enter into eternal perfection, is found in Christ. May his grace be with you all. Amen.

Placed as this blessing is at the end of the book there is but this one more thought,—this is what we shall wish for when the end cometh. We shall come to the end of life, as we come to the end of our Bibles. And oh! aged friend, may thy failing eyes be cheered with the sight of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the last page of life, as thou wilt find it on the last page of thy well-thumbed Bible. Peradventure some of you may come to the last page of life before you get grace: I pray that there you may find it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Or, suppose we should not die; suppose the Lord should suddenly come in his temple. Oh! then may we have grace to meet him. I am so glad that a benediction closes the Apocalypse; for, as you stand in the book of Revelation, you hear the thunders roll, peal after peal, you see the vials poured forth, darkening the air, and sun and moon turned into blackness and blood! Earth reels beneath your feet, and stars fall like fig leaves from the tree! You are full of confusion and dismay, until you hear this holy whisper, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Let every star of the firmament fall where it will, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is with us. Rock and reel, ye mountains, and be dissolved, O earth, and pass away; if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us we fear not the end. We can serenely look upon the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds. Let the last

august tribunal sit, and men be summoned to stand before it, to receive their final doom, we shall without trembling advance before that great white throne and stand there, if the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us.

“ Bold shall I stand in that great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
While through his blood absolved I am
From sin's tremendous curse and shame.”

Oh! happy they, shrouded, and sheltered, and hidden, in Christ their Saviour; to whom his grace shall be like the white robes of Mount Tabor's transfiguration, for they shall be accepted in the Beloved, glorified in the glory of their Master. These are they to whom the text shall be fulfilled—“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.”

Finally, brethren, farewell, and as you go out I would like just to take my place at the doorway, to offer my hand of friendship, and say to each one, “Farewell for a little while. This is my best wish for you,—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Will you start back and say, “Sir, I know nothing of this grace”? Then would I ask you to stay a moment while I breathe the prayer, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” May be there is only a tear of penitence in your eye, no light of faith is there as yet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, poor broken-hearted penitent! May be you do not know Jesus yet, and you are only seeking him. His grace be with you now: may he manifest himself to you! And you, backslider, do you feel as if you cannot receive a blessing? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be especially with you, to raise you up, and set you on your feet again, as he did fallen Peter. I would like, if I could, to say to the stranger within our gates to-night, who does not often attend the house of God, it is our heart's desire for you that you may know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in truth. To the boys and girls here, the pastor says, “God bless you.” Little Mary, or Jane, or John, or Willie, or whatever your name may be, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”; for he saith, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” As for you, grey-headed friends, you who will soon be home, I wish you this parting blessing, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Till I see you again, “God bless you.” Till the day break, and the shadows flee away, may the Lord Jesus never be absent from you. Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Thessalonians v.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—951, 1028, 1053.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TWO GOOD THINGS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 17TH, 1880, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”—Psalm cxix. 71.

“It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.”—Psalm lxxiii. 28.

THERE is an old proverb which says, “When a man is forty he is either a fool or a physician”; that is to say, he either does not know anything, or else he begins to know what is good for him. Some of us who are beyond that age think that we know in some measure what is good for us. We are not inclined to be very positive as to what is good for other people; but there are one or two things in reference to ourselves of which we say very dogmatically, “They are good for *me*.” We have undergone such a sufficiency of investigation, experiment, and personal trial, that we are not in any fear of being contradicted; or if we should be, we put our foot down and defy the contradiction.

These two things in my two texts I am certain about, and I believe there are many here who share my positiveness. The first is, that whatever it may be for other people, “it is good *for me* to have been afflicted;” and the second is, that whatever it may be to other people, “it is good *for me* to draw near to God.” We assert this, not because we have been told so, but because of personal proof; and we assert it now, not as young beginners who are buckling on their harness, and who think themselves certain; but as those who have gone some distance in the pilgrimage of life, and know by actual test and matter of fact that it is even so.

Brethren, beloved, during our lives we have met with many things which we know were *not* good for us. Some things have been manifestly bad. Sin is always poisonous, whatever form it takes. Error is always injurious, however insidious may be its shape, and however poetic may be the terms in which it is expressed. We pray God that we may have nothing to do with sin or with error, for these things cannot be good; they must be evil. We have also met with certain things which at the time appeared to us to be good, and under some aspects might have been so; but we are not sure at the present moment whether they were good or not. We have enjoyed soft hours of ease which, perhaps, weakened us, or sunshiny times of high delight which in a measure

turned our brain. There have been allotted to us times of learning in which we made great acquisitions of knowledge; but "knowledge puffeth up," and we were puffed up, we fear. There have been calms with us when the sea-birds sat upon the waters, and the seas were glassy as a lake, for the winds were hushed; but the calm was treacherous, and it bred ill savour and unhealthiness within our spirit. I am not sure, my friend, though you thought it a fine day when you grew rich—I am not sure that it was a good thing for you to be wealthy; for you have not been half so spiritually-minded or half so happy as you used to be. Yes, you did enter into a much larger sphere, and you thought it a noble thing. You almost rang the bells about it. Are you quite sure that it was good for you? Are you as good a man in the great sphere as you were in the little one? Do you live as near to God now, with that great business to handle, as you did when your hat covered your whole estate, and you went to bed at night with no fear of robbers, for you had nought to lose? Much that seems good is only good in the seeming. As for the two things before us in our texts, we have no question about them. We know that it is good for us that we have been afflicted; we know that it is good for us that we should draw near to God. We will talk about these undoubted jewels, and may God grant that our talk may be profitable.

I. Turning to the hundred-and-nineteenth Psalm, at the seventy-first verse, we will talk of that good thing first: **AFFLICTION HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US.** "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." I repeat what I said just now: every man must speak for himself; we are not sure that affliction is good for everybody. Some persons have been soured by affliction. They fell into trouble and they rebelled against God; and so the trouble did not work in them any permanent good; it rather developed their combative tendencies, and they have ever since remained with their hands against other men, compelling others to lift their hands against them. I have known individuals in a family who seemed to have a spite against everyone they saw, simply because they were disappointed in early life, or had made a venture and sustained a loss. They grew sour, they keep sour, and they grow sourer every day, till one wonders what strength of vinegar will yet flow through their veins. It is not good for some people to have been afflicted at all, and yet it is not the fault of the affliction; it is the fault of the persons afflicted. It might have produced in them a splendid character if all had been right to begin with; but, inasmuch as all was wrong, that very process which should have ripened them into sweetness has hastened them to rottenness. That same thing which in gracious souls has brought forth everything that is pure and lovely, has in others produced everything that is malicious and envious. I hope, however, that I may say of many here present, or that they can say of themselves, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." The enquiry is,—How has it been good?

First, *it has been good in connection with many other good things.* It has acted as a counteractive with reference to the great blessings which God has bestowed upon us in other ways. We are so constituted that we cannot bear very much prosperity. Some men might have been rich, ~~but~~ God knew they could not bear it, and so he has never suffered ~~them~~ to be tempted above what they are able to bear. Others might

have been famous, but they would have been ruined by pride, and so the Lord in tender mercy has withheld from them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, denying them this apparent advantage for their real good. Where God favours any man with prosperity he will send a corresponding amount of affliction to go with it, and deprive it of its injurious tendencies. I have seen men walking upon the high places of the earth till their brain turned and they fell, and there was woe in the church of God. I have seen others whom God has placed on a lofty pinnacle; but at the same time he has almost crushed them between the upper and the nether millstone of sharp spiritual trouble, or domestic suffering, or physical pain. Many have asked, "Why is this?" and the reason has been that their suffering was a counterpoise to their success. God's servant would have slipped with his feet if it had not been for the secret chastenings that he endured. I put it to some of you whom God has greatly favoured. You have looked upon your prosperity as a boon, but you have wondered why you should be tried at the same time: it was because you could not have borne the favour if you had not received the chastening. You were glad of the sail, and glad of the wind that filled it; but you could not understand why the ballast was put into your hold; you thought it hindered your progress. My friend, you would have been blown out of the water if it had not been for the ballast which kept you where you ought to be. I, for my part, owe more, I think, to the anvil and to the hammer, to the fire and to the file, than to anything else. I bless the Lord for the correctives of his providence by which, if he has blessed me on the one hand with sweets, he has blessed me on the other hand with bitters. To me he has measured out a double blessing—the lamb, and the bitter herbs to eat with it; seldom the one without the other.

Thus "It is good for me to have been afflicted"—good as a corrective for other goods.

It is good, dear friends, to have been afflicted *as a cure for evils existent within our nature*. David says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept thy word." That is the case with many of God's servants. They were prone to one peculiar temptation, and though they may not have seen it, the chastening hand of God was aimed at that special weakness of their character. We sometimes talk about phrenology, and the bumps on one's head; and *you* may make a great many mistakes over that matter, but God knows your tendencies and faculties. He knows the characteristics of his children accurately—far more accurately than any science can ever tell them, and he deals with extraordinary wisdom and prudence towards each one of his family. I suppose that, when the biographies of the saints are all read by the light of eternity, we, even we, shall be able to see why the painful career of certain Christians could not have been other than it was if they were to get to heaven at last: we shall see why that unusual trial was sent, and sent when they seemed least able to bear it. We shall discover that God interposed the screen of trial against the unseen fiery dart which only his eternal eye discovered, and laid the weight just where Satan was about to put the hand to overthrow, that very weight adding power to stand to the man who, in the lightness of his heart, had else been tripped up. It is all well, brother; it is all well. The

surgery which is cutting so deep—the knife which is cutting to the very quick—is only reaching to the point where the mischief lies. That mischief must come out, root and branch. There is a cancer of evil tendency within us, and not a rootlet of it must be left; for, if the least fibre of it be suffered to remain through tenderness it will be an unkind tenderness; for the cancer will shoot again, and fill the heart with its malevolence. Therefore does the Lord out of love cut deep: sharp and cruel are his wounds. Most cruel do they seem when they are in greatest tenderness of grace. We do not know yet all the mischief that is in us. I would undertake in five minutes to make any perfect man prove to himself that he was not perfect. Only let me set certain persons upon him to tease him, and we shall soon see his irritation. Let the devil loose on a man who is hard by the threshold of heaven, and you will soon find that corruption dwells even in the hearts of the regenerate. The Lord would have us aware of this, and therefore he often sends trial to reveal the hidden evil. We are often like a glass of water which has been standing still for hours, and looks very clear and bright; but there is a sediment, and a little stir soon discovers it, and clouds the crystal; that sediment is the old nature. Trial comes and arouses into activity that which had been lying still, and we say, "Dear me, I had no idea that such evil was in my heart." Of course you had not. You who live so comfortably at home among Christian friends do not know how sinful you are; you hear of people out in the world doing this and that, and you say, "What naughty folks they are." They are no worse than you would be if you were put into the same position, only you are at ease and they are sorely tempted. Dogs sleep when no one enters the house; but a knock at the door will set them barking.

The Lord does not wish us to boast of sham holiness, and therefore he sends us trials that we may see the mischief which lurks in our hearts, and that we may be driven to the Holy Spirit for power to conquer our sin, and to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ for the real taking away of guilt. He who has struggled with his inward sins must know that he has been helped both to discover and to overcome many of them by his afflictions; and so in this sense it is good that he has been afflicted. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him"; if this be so, we may not only bear the rod, but even kiss it.

Affliction is also useful to God's people as an actual producer of good things in them. Some virtues cannot be produced in us—at least, I do not see how they can be—apart from affliction. One of them is patience. If a man has no trial, how is he to be patient? We all think ourselves patient when we have nothing to bear. We can all stand on the mountain tops before we have tried those dizzy heights, and we are all brave when the war is over, though things look rather different when bullets whistle about our ears. When we are thrown into the sea our swimming abilities are not quite so extraordinary as we thought they were. We have great notions of what we can do; but trial is the test. Patience, I think, can scarcely be said to be in a man unless he has endured tribulation, "for tribulation worketh patience." A veteran warrior is the child of battles, and a patient Christian is the offspring of adversity.

There is a very sweet grace called sympathy, which is seldom found in persons who have had no trouble. We are told that our dear Lord and Master himself learned sympathy by being tempted in all points like as we are. He had to feel our infirmities, or else he could not have been touched with a fellow feeling towards us. It is surely so with us. I have stayed sometimes with an admirable brother who never had, he told me, an ache or a pain since he was born that he recollects; he is a man of fifty, and in splendid health. Well, he tries to sympathize with people, and he does do it to the utmost of his power, but it makes you smile. It is like an elephant picking up a pin. It is a wonderful feat for him to do. He does not understand it. You know yourself how hard it is to get sympathy out of those who have never endured a trial similar to your own. Someone goes to see a widow, and talks to her about her grief, and she says to herself all the time, "What does he know about it? He has never lost the partner of his life." A bachelor speaks to a dear soul who has just buried her little child. Unless he is a very wise man he is apt to say something about children which will irritate rather than console the bereaved mother. You may try your best, but you have not much of the faculty of sympathy unless you have been in the trial. It is by passing through the fire that we know how to deal with people who are in the furnace. So we may thank God that we have been afflicted, if we are ministers, or if we are teachers of others. We have sometimes to suffer, not for our own sake, but for the sake of others, that we may be enabled to speak a word in season to him that is weary, and say to such, "I know your road. I have been that way before. I know the darkness and weariness of the way." Pilgrims who are enduring the ills of the wilderness take heart when they see a fellow-traveller to whom all these are common things.

Again, it is good for me to have been afflicted because *affliction is a wonderful quickener*. We are very apt to go to sleep; but affliction often wakes us up. A coachman driving a pair of horses was noticed by one who sat upon the box-seat to give a cut of the whip to the off horse. The animal was going on quite regularly and properly, and it seemed a needless cruelty to whip it. Another journey, and he was observed to do just the same just at that place, and the question was put, "I always notice that you give that horse a cut of the whip just here,—why is it?" "Well, sir, he has a nasty habit of shying just at this spot," said the driver, "and I take his attention off by making him think of the whip for a moment." There is something in that, brethren. Every now and then you and I are apt to shy, and an affliction takes off our attention from temptation. There is also another danger in a life of ease: we are far too apt to go to sleep. Like horses, we are apt to get into the way of going on at a regular trot till we move mechanically and pursue our way half asleep. I do not know whether we are all awake even now. Many ministers preach asleep. I am sure they do. Many deacons do all the church business asleep; and numbers of people come to the prayer-meetings and pray in their sleep. I do not mean physical sleep, but I mean spiritual sleep, which is quite as serious a matter. The whole of some men's religion is a kind of sleep-walking. There is not that vigour in it, there is not that heart in it, there is not that earnestness in it, that there ought to be. They want to be ~~waked~~

up by something startling. Our trials and afflictions are intended to do this. They come like a clap of thunder, and startle us till we ask, "Where am I? What am I at?" And we begin to question ourselves, "Am I really what I profess to be?" Death stares us in the face. We are put into the balance and weighed and tried; we try our hopes and professions, and are less likely to be self-deceived. Realities become realities, and fancies become fancies, when sharp trials befall us. The things of this world become dreams to us when keen affliction comes, and so it is of special benefit to us because, under the Spirit of God, it is awakening and arousing.

Again, according to our text, it is good for us to have been afflicted by way of *instruction*. "It is good for me to have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Trial is our school where God teaches us on the black-board. This school-house has no windows to let in the cheerful light. It is very dark, and so we cannot look out and get distracted by external objects; but God's grace shines like a candle within, and by that light we see what else we had never seen. I stand on the level of my fellow men in the daylight, and I cannot see the stars; the glare of day hides them; but if I am made to go down the deep well of affliction, I look up, and there are the stars visible above my head. I see what others cannot see. I get the Bible; and its promises seem written as men sometimes write with juice of lemon, in invisible characters; I hold the book before the fire of affliction, and the writing comes out clearly, and I see in the Bible what I never else had seen if it had not been for fiery trials. The word of promise must be precious, for God gave it; but I get into trial myself, and there I test it, and of its preciousness I become personally assured. We learn, I hope, something in the bright fields of joy; but I am more and more persuaded that we do not learn a tenth so much there as we do in the Valley of Death-shade. There the world loses its charms, and we are obliged to look away to God; there illusions and delusions pass away, and we are compelled to rest on the eternal Rock; there we learn the truth in such a way that we never forget or doubt it. I would to God that some young preachers were plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, that they might become sound in the faith. I could wish that some of God's people were plunged into a sea of tribulation, that they might get rid of the modern nonsense which delights them now, and come back to the old, substantial doctrines of the Puritans, which are the only things worth having when we come to suffer or to die. Yes, it is good for me to have been afflicted. Is it not good for you too, dear friends, in the way of holy education, teaching you God's word, and the value and the preciousness of it?

II. I cannot, however, speak any longer upon the virtues of affliction; for I want two or three minutes to dwell upon the truth that, **DRAWING NEAR TO GOD HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US.** Turn to the seventy-third psalm at the last verse—"It is good for me to draw near to God."

Here, again, we speak with great certainty. Come, brothers and sisters, is it not good for you to draw near to God? But what does this drawing near to God mean?

First, to feel that God is near us—to be conscious of his presence; to feel, next, that we are perfectly reconciled to him by the death of his Son, and that we are permitted to speak with him as a man speaketh

with his friend, and in speaking to him to praise him for what we have received, and to ask him for what we need. We draw near him when we tell him what we feel, and assure him of our belief in his great love. You know what it is to draw near to your friend and to have heart to heart converse with him. Then you and the beloved one are quite alone, and have no secrets. You tell all your own secrets, and you learn all that your beloved has to tell. This is drawing near to God—when the secret of your heart is with God, and the secret of the Lord is with you; when he speaks to you by the Word and you speak to him by prayer; when you confess sin and he grants forgiveness; when you spread your wants before him and he assures you of abundant supplies. Now, is not this good? Is it not pleasant? Is it not enriching? Does it not raise the soul up above the world? Is it not a very good and profitable thing, so that we may say of it emphatically, "It is good for me to draw near to God"?

One good thing that comes out of it is mentioned in the text. Observe: "I have put my trust in the Lord God." The nearer you get to God the more you will be able to trust him. An unknown God is an untrusted God. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Those who have had most dealings with God believe most in him. You that begin with him try to trust him; but those who have dealt with him for long feel that they do trust him, and cannot help it. What is faith in God, brethren, but common-sense? though, like common-sense, it is the most unusual and most uncommon thing in all the world. To trust in one who must be true is a common-sense proceeding; and to trust my God who cannot lie is the dictate of true reason. To make him, who is the greatest fact and the greatest factor, to be in my life both the greatest factor and the greatest fact, and to act as believing him to be real, this is prudence. I pray you, draw near to God, so that faith may become to you the mainspring of your life, the new common-sense of your instructed spiritual nature. I rejoice in a faith that will go with me into everything. Sunday-keeping faith, meeting-going faith, if it ends there, is a pretty piece of confectionery; but faith about my pain, my poverty, my despondency, my old age—that is faith. I want to see a more hardy, practical, workable faith abroad in the land. Look at Abraham's faith. I know it was spiritual, and so do you; but what had it to do with? It had to do with the birth of a child, with seeking a city, with cattle, with land, and the events of every-day life. That is the sort of faith you and I want—Monday faith, and Tuesday faith, and Wednesday faith; faith that will go into the kitchen; faith that will live in the workshop with you that are bookfolders, when the other girls laugh at you; faith that will be with you men that are in the workshop where others use foul language; faith that can cheer a sailor in a storm; faith that can help a dying man in the hospital,—household faith, every-day faith. This is only to be got by drawing near to God. Get right close to him, in deed and in truth, the very life of you living upon the life of God, and then faith will enter into your daily life. You will put your trust in God as your constant helper if you constantly draw near to him.

I desire to bear my witness in the last words of this psalm—"I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works." My

first text, as far as it relates to a preacher, shows how he is taught in private: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes": my second text, so far as it relates to the preacher, shows how he is helped to preach in public,—“It is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all thy works.” To be able to speak of God’s works to others is no small gift, and you gain it by trusting in God yourself, finding his promise true, and then bearing witness to others. Draw near to God, and have communion with him, and then come down from the mount and speak with the people, believing what you say, and expecting God to bless it to those who hear it. That is the way to preach; and I pray that every one of us who opens his mouth for God may do it in this fashion. It is not merely what is in the Bible that we have to set before the people, but what we ourselves have tasted and felt of the good word of truth experimentally; declaring Jesus Christ in the power of his resurrection as we know it in our own hearts. We cannot do this except by intimate personal fellowship with God. You, dear friends, who are engaged in teaching, cannot learn the truth without some measure of affliction, and you cannot tell it out in the right spirit without a large measure of drawing near unto God. Then you can say, “This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him.” You can say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” You can say, “I sought the Lord, and he helped me.” There is a convincing power about such personal testimony. Then it is not only Christ’s word that God blesses, but it is your word too. “Oh,” say you, “dare you say that?” Yes, Jesus himself said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on me through *their* word.” They themselves took the word from Christ just as they took the bread out of Christ’s hands when he fed the multitude: it was Christ’s word just as it was Christ’s bread till they got it, but as when they had once received the bread it became Peter’s bread, and John’s bread, and James’s bread, and they handed it out, and the people fed thereon; so did the word become “their word” when they personally accepted it, and afterwards passed it to others. It was all Christ’s, and yet it was theirs. And you must get the bread in your own hands; you must taste it yourself; you must break it yourself, or else you will not be likely to be blessed with living power amongst the sons of men. Now, let us join in thanking God, if he has afflicted us, and if he has drawn us near to himself; and let us go forth, not to ask for afflictions—that would be unwise—but to accept them hopefully when they come. Let us draw near to God to-night, and let us not go to our beds till we have seen the face of the Well-beloved. This shall be my vesper song:—

“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Saviour’s breast.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm lxxiii.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—46 (Vers. II.), 778, 745.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

FOUR CHOICE SENTENCES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 3RD, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

My discourse this evening will scarcely be a sermon—it will be expository rather of the life and experience of Jacob upon one point. In order to bring it out I shall want four texts, but lest you should let any one of them slip, I will give them to you one at a time.

I. First, turn to the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis, at the fifteenth verse, and read of PRESENT BLESSING. The Lord said to his servant Jacob,—

“Behold, I am with thee.”

Jacob was the inheritor of a great blessing from his fathers, for this sentence was spoken in connection with the following words, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac.” It is an inexpressible privilege, dear friends, to be able to look back to father and grandfather, and perhaps farther still, and to say, “We come of a house which has served the Lord as far back as history can inform us.” Descended from Christians, we have a greater honour than being descended from princes. There is no heraldry like the heraldry of the saints. Jacob might be very thankful that, as God had blessed Abraham and had blessed Isaac, so he blessed him in the same way, speaking to him in the same terms as he had spoken to them, for he had expressly said to each of them, “I am with thee.” Are any of you the children of godly parents, and has the Lord called you by his grace? Then bless his name, and take heed that you do nothing to dishonour an estate so honourable. Try and maintain, as long as you live, the good repute which in infinite love God has put upon your household. Are you, however, a child of godly parents and not yet converted? I would warn you against putting the slightest reliance upon your birth; for, remember, if Isaac was the child of Abraham, so also was Ishmael, but no blessing came to Ishmael of a spiritual kind. It is in vain to be born of blood, or of the will of the flesh; we must be born again from above. God is a sovereign, he is not bound to dispense his favours from father to son: and when he does so, we are to admire his grace. Do not imagine that there is such a thing as hereditary piety; it must be wrought in

each individual by the self-same Spirit. Still, it is one of the highest privileges that God has ever been pleased to grant to me that I can rejoice in a father and a grandfather who trained me in the fear of God; and I congratulate every young person who has such a pedigree. God bless you. Be not satisfied unless you yourself obtain such mercy as God gave to your ancestors, and hear the Lord saying, "I am with thee."

This mercy was brought home to Jacob at a time when he greatly needed it. He had just left his father's house, and he felt himself alone. He was coming into special trial, and then it was that he received a fuller understanding of the privilege which God had in store for him. Let me read the words to you,—*"I am with thee."* I have tried to think them out that I might speak concerning them to you; but they are too full. I defy anybody to measure their height and depth, their length and breadth. That God should give to Jacob bread to eat and raiment to put on was much, but it is nothing compared with *"I am with thee."* That God should send his angel with Jacob to protect him would have been much; but it is nothing compared with, *"I am with thee."* This includes countless blessings, but it is in itself a great deal more than all the blessings we can conceive of. There are many fruits that come of it, but the tree that yields them is better than the fruit. *"I am with thee."* Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth? Will God walk with a man, and speak with him? "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" And yet he says, *"I am with thee."* Thou art in thy courts above, and thou makest heaven heaven by thy presence, and yet thou sayest, *"I am with thee."* What more couldst thou say to a seraph than this—*"I am with thee"?*

Why, when God is with a man there is a familiarity of condescension that is altogether unspeakable: *it ensures an infinite love.* "I am with thee." God will not dwell with those he hates. He putteth away the wicked of the earth like dross. He saith to them, "Depart, I never knew you"; but to each one of his people he saith, "I know thee by thy name; thou art mine. And, more than that, I am with thee." As a man delights to be with a friend, so are the delights of Christ with the sons of men, whom he has chosen and redeemed with blood.

"I am with thee,"—*it means practical help.* Whatever we undertake, God is with us in the undertaking; whatever we endure, God is with us in the enduring; whithersoever we wander, God is with us in our wandering. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If God be with us, can we ever be exiled or banished? If God be with us, what can we not do? If God be with us, what can we not endure? Well said the apostle, as if answering that question, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "I am with thee." Come, brother or sister, if thou wouldst get the fulness of this privilege, believe that God is near thee now, near to thee as he that sits at thy side; nay, nearer; for he is so with thee as to be in thee. And dost thou know that his whole Godhead is with thee? "I am with thee:" as if there were not another, the whole Godhead is with thee. Thou hast not to cry aloud like Baal's priests, or cut thyself with knives, that thou mayest attract his eye; for he says, "I am with thee." Thy

sighs he hears; thy tears he puts into his bottle. "I am with thee." And thou hast not his presence only, but *his sympathy*: he means, I am feeling with thee, suffering with thee. If there be a load, I bear it with thee; if there be work to do, I will work with thee. Ye are workers together with God. Beloved, said I not rightly that I can never open up all this to you? Roll it under your tongue as a sweet morsel, and if it go down into your inward parts it shall not be bitter there, but sweeter still. "I am with thee." Oh, the richness of this special blessing!

How precious it must have seemed as it came to Jacob in that den of a place, where he lay with the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the earth for his bed, stones for his pillow, and God for his companion. "I am with thee. To-morrow when thou shalt open thine eyes thou wilt look back to the west and say, 'I have left my father's house and my mother, Rebecca, behind me'; and the tears will be in thy eyes; and thou wilt look to the east and say, 'I am going to the house of my mother's kindred, and I know them not, save that I have heard concerning uncle Laban that he is hard and grasping; and I know not how he will receive me.'" But is not that a precious thing to start upon a journey with—"I am with thee"—I, the ever blessed? Though thy mother is not with thee, "I am with thee." Is any young friend here who is leaving home? Are you going away for the first time, and do you feel sad? Or are you about to emigrate to a distant country, and does your heart feel heavy? Do not go at all till you can get a hold of this, "I am with thee." Say unto the Lord, "If thy Spirit go not with me, carry me not up hence." Wait till he gives the answer, "My Spirit shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." This ought to be the blessing of your opening life, "I am with thee." Is God with you to-night? Can God be with you? Some come to service after having quarrelled with their wives and families; God is not with them. People who are following ill trades, and living ill lives, and rejecting the gospel, God cannot be with them. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" If you are a believer in Christ, and the Spirit of God has produced in you the true fruits of the Spirit, then you may say, "He is with me;" but not else.

Now turn to the thirty-first chapter of Genesis, at the third verse, and read these words,—

"I will be with thee."

We will call this FUTURE BLESSING. It is almost unnecessary to take this second text; for if it is written, "I am with thee," you may depend upon it that he *will be* with us, for God does not forsake his people. Some people believe in a God who loves to-day and hates to-morrow; who pardons sin and yet afterwards condemns. Such a God is not my God; for mine is unchangeable.

"Whom once he loves he never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

"I am God; I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

Poor Jacob had been living with Laban, and had passed through many messes and troubles, and it was time that he should receive the word of blessing over again. We read that, "Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as before." He had begun to take root in the wordling's portion, and was willing to stop away from the promised land, and build up a family among his worldly connections; but the Lord practically said to him, "This is not your rest." Laban's sons begin to growl as they see how their brother-in-law's flocks have increased, and therefore the time has come for Jacob to go. Jacob does not like it, he never did like moving. Family connections, a host of children, and a mighty crowd of cattle, made a removal a great undertaking. Then the Lord said to him, "I will be with thee;" as much as to say, "I will be more with thee in Canaan than I ever have been in this place, which is not the land of promise. I will give thee my special presence if thou wilt get away into the place of the separated life; and walk with me as thy father Isaac did." It was very sweet many years ago to some of us to hear the Lord say, "I am with thee," and to know that it was true; for "truly our fellowship was with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ;" but it may at this hour be very opportune if the Lord should renew his promise to us by saying, "I will be with thee." You are commencing a new form of life, you are entering on new trials, you are undertaking new duties, and now comes in the new promise, "I will be with thee." If those upon whom you had a right to rely have turned against you, if those who were really indebted to you have become envious of you—"yet, nevertheless," saith God, "I will be with thee."

Jacob's journey was to be a very venturous one. He knew that Laban would not like it, and, probably, would pursue him; but God says, "Go, and I will be with thee." He knew also that his brother Esau would be pretty sure to take vengeance upon him for the sorry trick he had played him; and that touched his conscience, and he feared and trembled; but God said, "I will be with thee." The plainest road in the world is wrong if God does not bid us take it; and the roughest and most unpromising way will turn out to be safe and right if God commands our journey. Jonah thought it was all right to go to Tarshish; but God was not with him, and he came back by a route which he never expected to follow. If you go your own road, I wish you may be fortunate enough to meet with as good a return conveyance as Jonah did, for you will certainly have to come back. But if the road be never so rough, if it be God's road, you shall run over it like a young roe; God will make your feet like hinds' feet, and you shall tread upon your high places. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Only, mind that you follow a road in which God can be with you; for there are some ways in which God will never be found. He cannot walk in the ways of sin, or worldliness, or self-seeking: if we choose these we must go alone.

See, then, the promised mercy, and rejoice in it. Go forward, dear child of God, if the pillar of cloud is moving, without the slightest hesitancy, and let this be thy joy and comfort—"Certainly, I will be with thee. In all places whithersoever thou goest I will be with thee."

III, I want to go a step further, and come, in the third place, to

EXPERIENCED BLESSINGS. Let us look at Jacob's experience. Did Jacob find God to be with him? He had a long life and a tried one. He was a man that knew a great deal, and men that know a great deal are doubly likely to meet with great trouble. Cunning, wise, crafty, prudent, self-reliant people frequently flounder out of one slough into another. Above all things, I should dread being partner with a man that is over wise, for such men either make fools of themselves, or else they have to sleep with one eye open. Jacob's cunning was an injury to him in the long run. Abraham was simple as a child; he believed God, and never stooped to a trick: and therefore his life was a noble one. Jacob was a very wise person, the kind of gentleman to have made a financier, or the manager of a company. He was a rare man of business; in fact, he was the father of the Jews, and that is saying a great deal. Yet because of his sharpness he was often robbed, and through his cunning he was overreached; and he did not, after all, so much enjoy life, and was neither so rich nor so happy as his simple-minded grandfather, Abraham.

We will, however, hear what Jacob has to say about these two gracious words of God, "I am with thee," and "I will be with thee." Turn to the thirty-first chapter again, and read the fifth verse. Up to as far as the time that he was about to leave Laban, he says,—

"The God of my father hath been with me."

I have read that testimony with great joy. I thought of Jacob thus—Well, you certainly were not eminent for grace while with Laban. You were plotting and scheming—you against Laban and Laban against you; and yet your witness is, "The God of my father hath been with me." This is all the more encouraging as coming from you. Jacob seems to say of his God: It was he that gave me my wife and my children; it was he that prospered me in the teeth of those who tried to rob me; the God of my father hath been with me notwithstanding all my shortcomings. I trust that some of you can bear the like witness. Though you have not been all that you could wish in the Christian life, yet you can say, "The God of my father has been with me."

Now, we will look at him a little further on, in the thirty-fifth chapter, and the third verse: there we shall find him saying—"Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress, *and was with me in the way which I went.*"

As I have already said, he left Laban's house; and it was a very venturesome journey, but God was with him: Jacob tells us that so it was. Poor Jacob was full of fear when he heard that Esau was coming to meet him. You can see that by the way in which he divided his flocks and his herds, and set apart so large a present for Esau. But God does not leave his people because of their fears. I am so thankful for that. If he were to cast us off because of our unbelief, is there one of us who would not have been cast off long ago? There was Peter walking on the waters with a brave faith: was not Christ with him? Yes, or else he could not have stood on the wave at all. By-and-by his faith failed him, and down went Peter; but did Christ give him up and

say, "You shall die: according to your unbelief shall it be unto you"? No, there is not such a word as that in the Bible; but it is written, "According to thy faith shall it be unto thee." Jesus stretched out his hand and grasped sinking Peter, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" So, though you may grieve the Lord by doubting and fearing, and though you ought to be ashamed of yourself for so doing, yet, still, he will not forsake you. If there is faith in your heart, though it be but little, you shall have to say, despite your doubts and fears, "The Lord was with me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went."

There was a night of wrestling with Jacob. His faith enabled him to draw near to God in mighty prayer, and his fear made him the more desperate and importunate. He said, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Though he had to be importunate, yet it was not because God was against him, but because God was with him; for he that can exercise importunate prayer proves that God is with him strengthening him thus to supplicate. His wrestlings ended in his victory.

On that day, too, I have no doubt, Jacob was very much cast down, because he remembered his sin. He knew he had ill-treated Esau, and robbed him of the blessing; but, for all that, he came with a repentant heart to submit himself before his brother and to do what he could to please him. Because of this, God was with him. Oh, in that day, dear child of God, when you remember your faults, and your heart is heavy, do not think that the Lord has left you. It is one token that he is with you that he makes you confess your sin, and humble yourself before him. Still believe in him; still hear his word; and you shall have to say, "He was with me in the way which I went."

At the close of his life we find Jacob more fully than ever confessing that the presence of God had been with him. I read you the passage where he wished that the God that had been with him might be with his grandsons in the selfsame way—the forty-eighth chapter, at the fifteenth and sixteenth verses. "He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." There is his last testimony to the faithfulness of God.

He had lost Rachel—oh, how it stung his heart; but he says, "God redeemed me from all evil." There had come a great famine in the land; but he says that God had fed him all his life long. He had lost Joseph, and that had been a great sorrow; but now, in looking back, he sees that even then God was redeeming him from all evil. He said once, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me;" but now he eats his words, and says, "The Lord hath redeemed me from all evil." He now believes that God had been always with him, had fed him always, and redeemed him always, and blessed him always.

Now, mark you, if you trust in God, this shall be your verdict at the close of life. When you come to die you shall look back upon a life which has not been without its trials and its difficulties, but you shall thank God for it all: and if there is any one thing in life for which you will

have to praise God more than for another, it will probably be that very event which seems darkest to you. Did God ever do a better thing for Jacob than when he took Joseph away and sent him to Egypt to preserve the whole family alive? It was the severest trial of the poor old man's career, and yet the brightest blessing after all. Can you not believe it? Inside that hard-shelled nut there is the sweetest kernel that you have tasted. Rest assured of that. Your father's rumbling waggons have woke you out of sleep, and you are frightened at them; but they are loaded with ingots of gold. You never have been so rich as you will be after your great trouble shall have passed away.

IV. It is time for me to conclude, and I do so by bringing before you, in the fourth place, one more word of blessing. We have had present blessing: we have had future blessing: we have had experienced blessing three times over: and now we go to TRANSMITTED BLESSING; for we find Jacob transmitting the blessing to his son and to his grandson. Read in the forty-eighth chapter, at the twenty-first verse,—

"Behold, I die: but God shall be with you."

I commenced by noticing the blessing which passed on from Abraham to Isaac: and now we see that Jacob hands it on to Joseph, to Manasseh, and to Ephraim,—“I die: but God shall be with you.” Some of you perhaps are thinking, “We are getting near the end of life; we have children, but they are not all converted yet, and those that are, it may be, are dependent upon us: what will become of them?” Do you think God will leave your children? Cannot you trust them with him? What did your father do with his son? One after another the former generations have passed away, and the Lord has been faithful to their successors. Do you think he will not be faithful to those who come next? You have brought up your children in his fear; you have rested upon his name, and therefore you may say to them, “I die: but God shall be with you.” The time will come when we who are ministers shall be taken away from our beloved work on earth, and we cannot help thinking about the dear friends who hang upon our lips and depend upon our ministry. It is well for us to look a little forward and say, “I die: but God shall be with you.” My venerated predecessor, Dr. Rippon, many a time prayed for his successor. I am sure he did not know who his successor was to be, for I was born about the time when he was dying; but, doubtless, I inherit that good man's prayers. I am sure I do. “I die,” the old man might have said, “but God shall be with you.” The church at New Park-street thought it an awful thing for the old gentleman to die; but he would have been of no service to us if he had remained here for ever. And so it will be by-and-by. People say, “What will the Tabernacle people do if they lose their minister?” It will probably be the greatest of blessings when it happens. Many good men have clung to their places longer than they should have done, and have pulled down much that they had built up. It is well when the Lord says to such, “Friend, come up higher.” We may look forward each one to leaving our class, or to leaving the church over which we watch, or to leaving the great work over which we preside and we may say, “I die: but God shall be with you.” God is not limited to one minister or fifty ministers. When we are gone, God will be with you.

They used to say of our dear friend, George Müller, "What will become of the Orphanage when Mr. Müller is laid aside?" When I was speaking to him, he said to me, "That was a question which I felt George Müller had nothing to do with. God will use George Müller as long as he likes, and when he chooses to put him aside, he will use somebody else." And now, mark, George Müller is not at Bristol. I believe he is at this present moment preaching in America. He has been all over Europe preaching, and the Orphanage has had very little of his personal presence, and yet it has gone on without George Müller, so far. Such a fact tends to answer man's idle questions. Blessed be the everlasting God—if Abraham dies, there is Isaac; and if Isaac dies, there is Jacob; and if Jacob dies, there is Joseph; and if Joseph dies, Ephraim and Manasseh survive. The Lord shall never lack a champion to bear his standard high among the sons of men. Only let us pray God to raise up more faithful ministers. That ought to be our prayer day and night. We have plenty of a sort, but, oh, for more that will weigh out sixteen ounces to the pound of gospel in such a way that people will receive it. We have too much of fine language, too much of florid eloquence, and too little full and plain gospel preaching; but God will keep up the apostolical succession, never fear for that. When Stephen is dying, Paul is not far off. When Elijah is taken up, he leaves his mantle behind him. "I die: but God shall be with you." Take comfort, dear friends, and may his Spirit be with you, through Jesus Christ, his dear Son, whose name is "Emmanuel"—God with us.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xxviii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (Song III.); 681; 732.

THE Preacher has often been requested by his friends to report himself to them during his absence, and he therefore begs to say that he has safely reached the South of France, and already feels refreshed by change of scene, and by escaping from feg and frost into a balmy summer air. If pain is thus avoided, the mind invigorated, and life prolonged, the time is well spent. Our hope is in the great "Preserver of men" that it will assuredly be so. The prayers of loving friends are asked that in retirement nets may be mended in which many may afterwards be taken.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE MAIN MATTER.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name."—John xx. 30, 31.

THE public life of our most blessed Lord Jesus Christ was brief; few suppose it to have exceeded three and a half years; but yet what a full life it was. It had in it not only enough to compose the four gospels, each one of which contains sufficient to lead men to saving faith, but so much remained over and above that the apostle John makes this remarkable statement:—"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Our Lord's life was as ample as his own festivals; it feeds thousands, and with the fragments that remain many baskets might be filled. A man may complete a great and fruitful life in two or three years, while another may have existed as long as an antediluvian and yet his life may be poor and powerless.

Not only did the Lord Jesus speak and do great things as to number, but there was a world of power in each word and work. He did not display a multitude of feebilities, but each individual outcome of his life was grand enough to have been a marvel if considered by itself alone. As was the deer, in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily," such were the deeds; they also were full of grace and truth. There was a fulness of divine wisdom, grace, and power about each act of Jesus. Hence the apostle here speaks of the Lord's acts as signs—"many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples." There was a mass of instruction in all our Lord's movements; nothing about him was trivial. He preached by his entire life, preached a marvellous array of truths, and preached them with living freshness. Never is he twice the same, though always the same. When we find him repeating his discourses, as we sometimes do, if the Sermon on the Mount sounds very like the Sermon on the Plain, yet a different *spirit*.

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and aim, and tone create a singular variety. Each separate act of the Lord is a sign of something beyond itself, and the whole of the acts put together display an ocean of doctrine without bottom or shore. What a Christ was this! Oh that his Spirit may dwell in us, that our lives also may be rich and full; rich to the glory of God, and full to the blessing of our fellow-men.

Yet, dear friends, though the whole of Christ's life has not been written, we perceive in our text that what has been recorded is the most useful part of it, and that it was preserved for our benefit. The inspired record was written with a purpose: the facts were wisely culled and collected out of the entire mass on account of their bearing upon the desired object, and sufficient has been preserved to effect a design which, above all others, is most important to us: "these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." May our reverence to the inspired gospels lead us to give earnest heed to their design and object, for it would be profane to baffle their purpose by refusing their testimony.

First, this morning, let me speak a little with you upon *the design of all Scripture, which is faith*; secondly, upon *the great object of true faith, which is Jesus the Christ, the Son of God*; and then, thirdly, let us further commune together upon *the true life of the soul which is linked and wrapped up with the name of Jesus Christ*, in whom we are led to believe by the testimony of the things written concerning him.

I. First, then, dear friends, **THE DESIGN OF ALL SCRIPTURE IS TO PRODUCE FAITH.** There is no text in the whole Book which was intended to create doubt. Doubt is a seed self-sown, or sown by the devil, and it usually springs up with more than sufficient abundance without our care. The practice of reading sceptical works is a very dangerous one; we have enough tendency to sickness in our own constitutions without going to fever hospitals to test the atmosphere. Holy Scripture is no mother or nurse of doubt; it is the creator of a holy confidence by revealing a sure line of fact and truth. It has been thought by many expositors that John here refers only to the things which Jesus did after his resurrection—"Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples;" but I think there are abundant reasons, with which I need not trouble you just now, to show that John must have referred to the whole of our Saviour's life, and to all the acts of it, and that the book which he speaks of is his own book, the evangel which contains his own *life of Christ*. John includes the whole story of Jesus of Nazareth in the reference of the text. I venture to go much further, and to say that the statement that John here made, though it must refer to his own gospel, is equally true of the entire Scriptures. We may begin at Genesis and go on to the Book of Revelation, and say of all the holy histories, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." Though this Bible is a wonderful library of many books, yet there is such a unity about it that the mass of the people regard it as one book, and they are not in error when they do so: this one book has but one design, and every portion of it works to that one end. Of the whole canon of inspiration we may say, as we read every detail, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

Observe, then, *no part of Holy Scripture was written with any wish to magnify the writer of it.* Many human books are evidently intended to let you see how profound are the thoughts of their authors or how striking is their style. Self-consciousness is full often apparent, and the man is seen as well as the fruit of his mind. If some authors can at any time introduce themselves they do not hesitate to do so, even though they have to go out of their way to do it: but you shall never detect the least degree of this in any of the writers of sacred Scripture. True, they did not set that foolish fashion of certain "brethren" in modern times who call attention to their own modesty by placing their initials on their title-pages instead of their names. We have no prophet of the Lord named D. N. J., or M. C. H., and those who bear such initials in these days are by no means veiled writers, but are as well known as if their names were written out in full. The inspired authors freely write David, Job, Israel, John, Matthew, and why should they not? Having given their names, how very little of themselves will you ever find in their books. They lose themselves in their theme, and hide themselves behind their Master. A most striking instance of this is found in John's Gospel. John was a man above all others fitted to write the life of Christ. Did he not know more of Jesus both by observation, by intimate fellowship, and by hearty sympathy with him than any other of the evangelists? and yet he has left out many interesting facts which the others have recorded,—others, mark you, who did not actually see the facts as he did. Speaking after the manner of men, this silence is very wonderful. Can you guess how much this abstinence cost the apostle? The other three evangelists received much at second hand, though, truly, by the Spirit of God; but John literally and personally saw these things, and beheld them with his own eyes, and yet he gives us fewer incidents in the life of Christ than the other evangelists. What self-forgetfulness was this! He is silent because his speech would not serve the end he aimed at. And the most striking point is this,—he omits, as if of set purpose, those places of the history in which he would have shone. He and James and Peter were frequently selected by the Master to be with him when others were excluded, but of these occasions he says nothing. At the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus it is said of the disciples, as well as of the relatives and the multitude, that the Lord put them all out, and only suffered the three to be with him. This was a singular honour, but John does not say a word about the raising of the daughter of Jairus. What self-oblivion! I should not have omitted it if I had been writing, nor would you. If we had been writing apart from the inspiration of the Spirit, we should have treasured up those special incidents of favour, and we should not have thought ourselves egotistical either, but should have considered ourselves as specially called to record a miracle which was witnessed by so very few. The Spirit of God in moving John to write, took such full possession of him that he wrote only that which wrought towards the one great design. No matter how interesting the event, he leaves it unrecorded if he judges it to be aside from his design.

Notice, next, that three only were with our Lord in his Transfiguration, and John was one of them. John does not mention that august event except it be that he says, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the

Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," in which there may be a reference to it, but it is by no means clear; at any rate, he does not narrate the circumstance, but leaves it to other pens. This is a moral miracle! What uninspired man could have left out such a vision from his page? Even more striking is the fact that the Master when he took with him the eleven to the garden, left the major part of them at the gate, but he led the three further into the garden, and bade them wait at about a stone's-cast distance, where some of them heard his prayers, and observed his bloody sweat. John, who was one of them, says nothing about it. Had he forgotten it? That was impossible. Did he doubt it? Certainly not; but the omission shows you that these incidents were not written with the view of honouring John, but that the reader may be led to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. He leaves out that which would have brought John into the front, in order that he may fill up the whole foreground of his canvas with the portrait of his Lord. Everything is subordinated to the one grand end "that ye should believe that Jesus is the Christ."

What a lesson is all this to us who write or speak for God! Let us labour for this one thing, that we may lead men to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If any sort of preaching would exalt ourselves, let us choose another, lest we hide the cross of Christ. If we can occupy the space with something more forcible, let us omit the choicest piece of oratory. Let us prune the vine of our speech that all its sap may go to fruit, and let that fruit be the bringing of men to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Further, notice that *Holy Scripture was not written with the mere view of imparting knowledge to men by presenting them with a complete biography of Jesus Christ.* The one intent of Scripture is that ye may believe on Jesus Christ. It was not the aim of either of the evangelists to present us with a complete life of Jesus Christ. Observe the difference between such a writer as John and an ordinary biographer. Usually when you see a biography advertised it will be your wisdom to save your money, for scarcely ever is there a biography written that is fully worth the money asked for it. I can point you to biographies stuffed full of letters which might just as well have been burned, and commonplace which might as well have been forgotten. The good man never did anything in his life, except that he married a wife, and took a holiday and travelled through Switzerland, and went to Venice and Rome. Every scrap that he wrote home about the commonest incident of travel is secured, and inserted as if it were a priceless gem. It is just the same that every Tom and John and Mary would have said, and yet it is paraded as something heavenly. The book must be swelled out, and so the biographer gives us every bit of sense or nonsense that he can find. There must have been great searching of drawers, great writing to first cousins, and uncles and aunts, to know if they have an old letter anywhere of the dear deceased. All manner of small talk is inserted because, to speak the truth, our lives are mostly so little that if we do not blow them up with wind there will not be enough to make a volume for the book-market. How different is the biography of Jesus of Nazareth. The signs and wonders which he did are not written to make a book; they are not even written that you may be informed of all that Jesus

did; these are written with an end, an aim, an object,—“that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” Matthew when he writes of “Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham,” leaves out everything that does not bring out Christ in connection with the kingdom: he paints Messiah the Prince, and he will not be taken off from his work. Luke brings forth Jesus as the man, and you see how wondrously he keeps to that one line of things. But when you get to John, and he is about to bring forth the Lord Jesus as the Son of God, he omits numbers of details that show our Lord in other lights and other aspects. Here Jesus is not so much the King in his kingdom—he leaves that to Matthew, he sticks to his own point which is indicated by his opening sentences “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” He desires to set forth our Lord’s glorious Messiahship, and personal Sonship, and Deity, and he adheres to that, and to that alone. The evangelists do not attempt merely to increase our knowledge, but they aim to win our understandings, and to conquer our hearts for Christ.

Notice yet again, dear friends, that *the gospels and the other books of Scripture were not written for the gratification of the most godly and pious curiosity.* Truly, I would have liked to have acted to our Lord as Boswell did to his friend Dr. Johnson. I would have thought it an honour to have noted down every choice word he dropped, and every act he did. I would have recorded the very colour of his hair, and you should have known whether his eyes were blue or hazel: I would have left on record every incident about the very fabric of that hem of his garment which the woman touched. Would not any of you have done so? Do you not love him so much, and prize him so greatly, that you would have thought the smallest trifle about him to be a gem of knowledge. Our love ennoble everything that has to do with our adorable Lord. But the writers inspired of the Holy Spirit were not led astray by this feeling; they knew their object and gave their whole strength to it. The Holy Ghost did not send his servants to gather up interesting details and preserve curious facts. None of them wrote to gratify your curiosity, even about the things which concern your Lord and Master. You shall be told that which shall lead you to believe him to be the Son of God, but you shall be told no more; for had all been written you might have spent all your time in trying to know Christ after the flesh, but now he hath preserved only that which by his blessing shall teach you to know him after the spirit. It is not to gratify curiosity but to beget faith within the soul that the memoirs of our Lord are written by the evangelists.

Again, *the Scriptures are not even written with the view of setting before us a complete example.* I want you to notice that. It is true that the gospels set before us a perfect character, and we are bound to imitate it. It is true that when we read the life of Christ we may learn how to live, and how to die; but that was not the first and chief design of the writers: they wrote that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing, we might have life through his name. Good works are best promoted, not as the first, but as the second thing. They come as the result of faith, and he that would promote that which is pure and honest and holy, had best promote faith in Jesus

Christ, the Saviour. The Scripture does not go in for flowers first, nor even for fruit, but it plants roots, and hence it aims at implanting faith in Jesus Christ, for when we have believed in him, the faith that worketh by love will be sure to produce a sacred imitation of his most beloved and perfect character. Yes, let the truth stand as I have put it "these are written," first and last, with no other end and object but this "That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God."

Open his gospel and see how John all through keeps to his design. It would be worth while to spend the whole morning, and a half a dozen other mornings, in showing you that John never takes his eye from this one point. You will soon perceive that his Book contains a series of testimonies borne by persons led to faith in Jesus as the Christ. John in the first chapter teaches the truth which he was about to prove; read the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ"; here you see that Jesus is the Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." There is "the only begotten Son," and the two verses show us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. John had been convinced of this at our Lord's baptism by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon him; and therefore he bore this witness at the commencement. Almost immediately after follows the conversion of Andrew, and what does Andrew witness? He says to his brother Simon, "We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Close on the heels of that comes Nathanael's testimony, and he says, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Directly after follows the changing of the water into wine at the marriage of Cana in Galilee, one of the seven miracles which John mentions, and he never mentions any more than that seven, and of this, the first of the seven, he says, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." The miracle was intended to produce faith, and did produce it. At the end of each record of a miracle, John tells us that some believed in him, and generally that they came to believe that he was the Christ, the Son of God. That memorable third chapter concerning Nicodemus, shows us how that enquiring master of Israel came to believe in him; and how the Lord was revealed to Nicodemus as both the sent one and the Son, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In the fourth chapter you get to the well at Sychar, where the Lord manifests himself to a poor fallen woman, and she is convinced, and hastens to tell her friends, and they by-and-by know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world. In the case of the raising up of the nobleman's son in the same chapter, you are reminded by John that the father was led to faith in Jesus, and the natural inference is that you ought to be led to display a like confidence. In the fifth chapter the healing of the impotent man at the pool is narrated in order to introduce the statement "But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." When five

thousand had been fed, we read, "Those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." In the sixty-ninth verse of the sixth chapter you find Simon Peter saying, "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," and so in the seventh chapter, "others said this is the Christ," being convinced by that which he had spoken. To the man born blind Jesus said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and the man's practical answer was an avowal of faith and an immediate act of worship. But I am afraid you would soon grow weary if I were to dwell upon every incident which would prove my point. The whole Book is made up of modes of reasonings by which men have been led to believe in Jesus: it might have been written for the sake of the Unitarians of our own time. It contains repeated declarations that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and a series of testimonies of persons brought to see this by the signs that Jesus wrought amongst them. Study John's gospel with that view, and you will see how the Lord brings one to believe on him by a call which came with divine authority, a second by unveiling the secrets of her life, another by answering his prayers, another by enlightening his mind. Of the whole of his disciples our Lord gives the secret reason of their discipleship in his matchless prayer, "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." Throughout the whole book the strain is the same, for it begins with Andrew's confession, "We have found the Messiah," and ends with Thomas, to whom Jesus said, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands." Thomas cries in ecstasy, "My Lord and my God," and this is almost the topstone of the confessions and achievements of faith, but not quite, for here is the crown of all, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

You Bible readers, who have never believed in Jesus as the Christ, have read in vain: you have read to your own condemnation, but not to your salvation. Oh, you that are afraid that you may not be allowed to believe in Jesus, dismiss that foolish fear, for this holy book is written on purpose that you may believe, and therefore it is clear that you have full liberty to do so. Every time John dipped his pen into the ink he breathed the prayer, "Lord, bring men to believe in Jesus by that which I have written," and he closed his gospel by declaring the innermost longing of his living soul, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." My dear hearer, your immediate conversion to faith in the Lord Jesus is the object of this book. God grant it may be fulfilled in you!

II. We turn, in the second place, to a subject which is a step further on—THE GREAT OBJECT OF TRUE FAITH IS CHRIST JESUS. The text does not say, "These are written that ye might believe the Nicene creed," for, good as that creed is, it was not then composed, and is not the chief object of faith. It does not say, "These are written that ye might believe the Athanasian creed;" a very good creed, but rather savage, and also not then devised. No, no: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that

believing ye might have life through his name." That is to say, the faith which brings life to the soul is faith in the person, offices, nature, and work of Jesus; and though you may be in the dark about a thousand things, and may make mistakes about ten thousand more, yet if you believe in the Messiah, the Son of God, you have eternal life.

First, I am to believe in Jesus that *he is the Christ*, that he is the promised Messiah, anointed of God to deliver the human race. I must believe that this is he whom God promised at the gate of Eden, when he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." This is the sent One, who is come to seek and to save that which is lost: in him we are to believe, for it is written, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Next we are to believe that *he is the Son of God*—not in the sense in which men are sons of God, but in that higher sense in which he is the only-begotten Son of God, one with the Father, eternally and indissolubly one. "The Word was with God;" but more than that, "the Word was God." Now, this is to be believed if we would live unto God. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" A Jesus who is not divine could give us no power to overcome the world; but in his Godhead we find our strength.

Put the two together, that he, the divine One, became man, and was sent into the world to redeem us, and we have the right idea of Immanuel, God with us. Will this belief save us? Assuredly it will, but listen while I explain.

First, *believe this to be a matter of fact*. Having believed it to be a matter of fact, go on to look into the record concerning him till you are undoubtedly sure of it; for these are written that ye might believe with the fullest confidence that Jesus is God and Saviour. When you are sure of the fact, the next thing is to *accept it for yourself*: agree that Jesus shall be your anointed, through whom you will get the anointing which comes upon him as the Head, and descends to you as the skirts of his garment. At the same time unfeignedly consent that he shall be your God, and cry with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." You are getting on now to complete faith; go one step further. *Yield yourself up to the grand truth which you have received*, for that is saving faith, the submission of yourself to the truth. Acting upon the conviction of its truth, I must say,—since Jesus is now my Saviour he shall save me. Since he is the Christ anointed for me I will trust him, and share his anointing. Since Christ is the Son of God I will rest in him, that I also may become in him a child of God. That is the point. "He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Accept Jesus as he is set forth, for to "as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The faith which receives Christ as he is revealed as the Messiah, and as the Son of God, is the faith which hath eternal life, and the Scriptures are written that you may have this faith.

I want you to notice one thing more, and that is, we are to receive

Jesus of Nazareth as being the Christ and the Son of God *on the ground of the written word*. See—"these are written that ye might believe"; from this it is clear that the ground of acceptable faith is the written word of God, and it is vain to look for any other. "Oh," says one brother, "I could believe, but I do not feel as I ought." What have your feelings to do with the truth of the statement that Jesus is the Messiah the Son of God? I read in the newspaper such and such a statement about affairs in Europe. I may have sufficient cause for doubting the news, but it certainly would not be a good reason if I were to say, "I do not believe the telegram because I do not *feel* that it is true." How can our feelings affect matters of fact? They are either true or not, altogether apart from the condition of the hearer. Now, here is a testimony concerning Jesus borne by John and three other evangelists. If these things are true, then they *are* true whether your heart dances for joy or sinks in despair. Whatever becomes of our changeful feelings, facts are stubborn things, and alter not. Experience cannot make a thing true; and frames and feelings cannot make a thing to be a lie which is in itself true. Over the head, then, of all the storms, and turmoils, and changes of my poor, weak, silly nature, there rises a rock that is higher than I, higher than all things, a rock which cannot be moved, let the storm rage as long as it will—Christ Jesus, the anointed Son of God died in the room, place, and stead of all who trust in him; I trust in him, and I am saved. If he be indeed commissioned of God to save believers, and if he be himself God, pledged to save believers, then I, as a believer, am as safe as the throne of God, or the presence-angels which surround it. Whatever I feel or do not feel, I am a saved man since I heartily believe that which the Book was written to teach me, namely, God's gospel to men, embodied in Jesus Christ, who, being the Son of God, is anointed of the Lord to save his people.

III. So I come to the third point, which is this, that **THE TRUE LIFE OF A SOUL LIES IN CHRIST JESUS AND COMES TO THAT SOUL THROUGH FAITH IN HIM**. I understand by the life of a soul only one thing, and yet for the sake of clearing it we must divide it a little.

First, when a man has been found guilty of death, if by any means that sentence is removed from him, he may be said to obtain life, *life in its judicial form*. Suppose that a person who is condemned to die is by some just and lawful means acquitted; in that fact he finds life. That is the first form of life that every man has who believes that Jesus is indeed the Christ. He is acquitted, pardoned, justified, and therefore he lives. Through the righteousness of Jesus Christ he is made just in the sight of God; and being covered with perfect righteousness he lives, and must live for ever. He is absolved, for he hath believed in Christ Jesus, and by that act he has accepted the righteousness of God and escaped from death. The guilt has been removed, and therefore the penalty cannot be inflicted.

This judicial life is attended with *an imparted life*. God the Holy Spirit is with believers, breathing into them a new, holy, heavenly life. They are dead to the world, as we said last Sunday morning, and buried with Christ, but they live unto God, never more to be slain by sin. The life of Christ is infused into them by the Spirit of the living God, even

as the Lord Jesus hath testified. "Verily, verily, I say unto you he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

Observe that this life grows. It continues to gather strength, and as it increases it is spoken of by John as life "more abundantly." That life never dies; it is impossible that it should ever be destroyed; it is a living and incorruptible seed which abideth for ever. The life of saints on earth is, in fact, the same life as that of saints in heaven. There is no change in the substance of the new life when we enter glory, only it grows and develops and reaches perfection in heaven. The believer's life on earth is Christ; his life in heaven is the same. As far as our spiritual nature is concerned we have undergone the resurrection, and are raised from the dead, and the life that we here live is the resurrection life; yet the resurrection has not passed already; for as to the body, it must be changed, and if it dies and is buried it shall be raised again at the sounding of the last trump. We are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body from the power of death, waiting in the full assurance of hope. The soul even now lives in newness of life, for we are quickened by the Spirit of God.

The new life enters the soul in and through believing, and is the same life which we shall exercise for ever at the right hand of God, even as Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

I want to enlarge a little upon the fact, that this life comes with believing, because I want it to be noticed that it really comes with believing, apart from any other necessary circumstances. One person complains to me, "Sir, I cannot tell exactly when I was converted, and this causes me great anxiety." Dear friend, this is a needless fear. Turn your enquiries in another direction,—Are you alive unto God by faith? Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? Are you resting and trusting in him? "Yes," say you, "with all my heart." Well, never mind about *when* you were converted; the fact is before you, and its date is a small matter. If a person were to say to you, "You are not alive," how would you prove that you are alive? A good plan would be gently to tread on his toe, or do something to make him feel that you possess life. I do not think it could be necessary for you to find your certificate of birth, because if you held it in your hand and said, "That document is conclusive," it would not be half so convincing a proof of life as some distinct act of life. If I thought that I knew the very moment in which I was born again I might be mistaken; indeed little reliance can be placed upon our judgment or our memories. I would sooner believe to-day than be quite sure that I began to believe thirty years ago. Perhaps very few of you know the exact minute at which the sun rose this morning, and yet you do not doubt that he has risen for at this present moment you are enjoying his light. Some mornings you can tell the instant of the sun's rising, but frequently it is so cloudy that the sun is up before you know it. A man would be an absolute lunatic who should say, "I do not believe that it is daylight, for I do not know when the sun rose." Date is a very small and unimportant matter compared with certainty and fact. Do you believe in

Jesus Christ, then you are alive unto God, and life is the evidence of birth.

"Well," says another, "but I hardly know *how* I was converted." That, again, is another minor matter. Some of us can trace the way in which the Lord led us to himself, and we are very grateful to the instrument by whom we were brought to a knowledge of the truth; but our text does not state that the Bible was written that you and I might trace our faith in Christ to John, or to anyone else. No, it was written that we might believe in Jesus Christ as the result of testimony: and I care not one farthing by what testifying agent you were brought to do it, so long as you do but believe because of the witness of the word of God. I am sure whatever the outward means of your faith the Spirit of God must have wrought it, for there is no living faith apart from his sacred working upon the mind. If you believe sincerely, the mode in which you gained your faith need not be enquired into.

"Well," says one, "but I want to know that I am alive unto God by my feelings. I feel often so sad and full of pain." Listen: is not pain as good a proof of life as pleasure? If anybody said to me, "I know I am alive because I feel so well," I should reply, "And I sometimes know that I am alive because I feel so ill." Rheumatic pain is as sure a proof of life as a thrill of delight; and so anxiety about your state, and hatred of sin, and grief over your imperfection are just as sure signs of spiritual life as the highest joy or the liveliest energy. Do not worry yourself, therefore, about that; if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and are resting *in* him, it is well with you.

"But," saith one, "I change so much. I feel sometimes as if I must be a Christian; at other times I feel as if it was out of the question that I could be saved." Yes, and do you not change a great deal as to your bodily life? I do, I know. Why, this heavy, damp, thick atmosphere half poisons me. Lift me up a few thousand feet on a mountain side, with a good stiff breeze blowing, and I feel quite another man. Are these changes reasons for questioning my being alive? Nay, nay. Quite the reverse. The reason why I feel these changes is because I am alive, for I reckon that if I were a broomstick or a brick wall the atmosphere would not matter much. If you have no spiritual life you will know few changes, but because you are alive these variations must and will occur to you. I make you smile; I wish I could smile away some of those fears which hang like a nightmare over certain of the best of you.

"But I have such conflicts within," cries one. Ah, dear friend, there are no conflicts in dead men; there would be no warfare between faith and unbelief if you were not on the Lord's side. If our whole being remained in its natural death there would be no inward fighting, but inasmuch as there are two minds within you, depend upon it one of those minds is the mind of God. This inward conflict should not cause you to doubt, but rather lead you to cling the more tenaciously to your conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of men.

Faith in Jesus begets life, and this life will flourish or decay very much in proportion to our faith. Believe firmly, and your life shall be vigorous; believe tremblingly, and your life will be faint.

Yet all depends upon "*the name.*" Is not that a blessed word, "that

believing you might have life *through his name*." The name means the whole character of Christ,—all his offices and relationships, all the work he has done and is doing,—we "have life through his name." We have no life anywhere else but in that name. Jesus Christ said to Lazarus, "Lazarus, come forth," and why did he come forth? Why, because at the back of the word which called him there was *the name* of Christ, who quickeneth the dead. Why were demoniacs cured? Was it not because unclean spirits knew the name and trembled at it? The devil and death, sin and despair all yield to that name. When some began to exorcise in another name, the devil leaped upon them, and cried, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" That name hath power in heaven, hath power on earth, hath power in hell, hath power everywhere; and if we trust in that name, and live to the glory of that name, we have life through that name.

I come back to my beginning, and there I close: the one thing, the main thing, the only thing is that we do hold on to Jesus Christ, through thick and thin, through foul and fair, up hill and down dale, in the night and in the day, in life and in death, in time and in eternity; that we do steadfastly believe that Jesus of Nazareth who died upon the cross is the Messiah of God, yea, the Son of God, sent to cleanse away iniquity and bring in perfect righteousness. Whether we see him on his cross or on his throne, all our hope, all our trust must be fixed in him, and so we shall live when time shall be no more. Verily, I say unto you, those who thus trust him shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hands, for he hath said it, "I give unto my sheep eternal life." Stay you there, O true believers, and let none entice you from your steadfastness! If any of you have never exerted this faith, may the Lord bring you to Jesus at once. This sacred Book was written on purpose to make you believe; the Spirit is given to lead you to believe; the object of every preaching of the gospel is that you may believe; therefore come and welcome, and at this hour believe on the one saving name, and live thereby. God grant it for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John xx.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 435, 330.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

Mantone, Nev. 19th, 1881.

TO FRIENDS AT HOME,—I am happily resting. Pray that I may gather strength in body, soul, and spirit, and return to my labour to perform a far greater work than has ever been given me hitherto. At this time revival services are being held at the Tabernacle, and I beg all friends to strive together in their prayers for a great and extraordinary blessing. Especially let all members of the church be up and doing; for time is short, men are dying, wickedness abounds, and there is need that the gospel be preached with power.

With fervent love in Christ Jesus,

Yours for ever,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE NAZARENE AND THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 9TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.”—Matt. ii. 23.

We find the Jews speaking of Paul, and they say,

“We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”—Acts xxiv. 5.

Thus it appears that our Lord and Master is called a Nazarene, and his disciples are styled “the sect of the Nazarenes,” while Christian doctrine was called by the Jews the heresy of the Nazarenes.

Our Saviour, though actually born at Bethlehem, was commonly known as Jesus of Nazareth, because Nazareth was the place where he was brought up. There he remained with his reputed father in the carpenter's shop until the time of his showing unto the people. This Nazareth was a place very much despised. It was a small country town, and the people were rough and rustic. They were some three days' distance from Jerusalem, where I suppose the Jews thought that everything that was learned and polite could be found, as we are apt to think of our own city, or of Oxford, and Cambridge, and other seats of learning. The people of Nazareth were the boors of Galilee, the clowns of the country.

More than that, you will generally find in every nation—I was about to say in every county of our own country—some town made the butt of ridicule. I do not know that “silly Suffolk,” is any sillier than any other part of the world; but I do know that I myself happen to have been born in the next parish to the town of Coggeshall, in Essex, concerning which all sorts of jokes are made; so that when any stupid thing is done they call it “a Coggeshall job.” I merely mention this because it is an illustration of what used to be said concerning Nazareth. It was a primitive place. It was situated in Galilee, which was thought to be quite boorish enough, and Nazareth was the most rustic of all. The name signifies, in rough words, “sprouts,” and the Jews, who were great at puns upon names, threw it as a jest at the people who came

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from that town. We Anglicize it in a more refined way by the word "branch;" for "Netzar," or "Nazareth," signifies a branch.

You will begin to understand why the Saviour is said to be called by the prophet a Netzar, or a Nazarene, and you will guess that Matthew refers to the passage in Isaiah, in the eleventh chapter at the first verse, where it is said that a rod shall come out of the stem of Jesse, and "a Netzar, a Nazarene, a Branch shall grow out of his roots." There is another passage in Jeremiah where we read of the man, the branch,—the Netzar,—the Nazarene; and again in Isaiah, "And his name shall be called a branch," or Nazarene. Those are the passages, I think, to which Matthew referred when he said, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Netzar, a branch, a Nazarene." The Hebrews made a great deal out of names, a great deal more than you and I generally do with names of places in England, and they had reason for so doing, for there was generally a meaning in the names of places. Perhaps Nazareth was called "branch" because trees flourished there, and not much else; or because they thought that the people were rather verdant, and they therefore called them "sprouts" and "greens," making the same use of language as the vulgar do at this day when they wish to express contempt. That may have been the origin of the term "Nazareth." Certain it is that the place was the subject of the jests of the Jews of our Lord's time; for even Nathanael, in whom was no guile, one who spoke in a simple-hearted, honest way, and had no prejudices, but wished well to everybody, said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" As if he felt that prophets and saints were by no means likely to spring from a town so low down in the scale of progress and education. How could he of whom Moses spake be found away down there amongst the country folk of Nazareth?

As Nazarene was a term of contempt in the olden times, so it has continued to be. The apostate emperor Julian was wont always to call our Lord the Galilean; and when he died, in his agony of death, he cried, "O Galilean, thou hast vanquished me." He was obliged to confess our Lord's supremacy, though he still showed his contempt by calling him the Galilean. The Jews to this day, when they feel wroth against our Christ, are wont to call him the Nazarene.

Nazarene is not at all the same word as Nazarite. It is a different word in the Hebrew, and you must not confound the two. Never suppose that when you say, "He shall be called a Nazarene," that it signifies that he was called a Nazarite. Nazarite among the Jews would have been a title of honour, but Nazarene is simply a name of contempt. A late traveller tells us that he had a Mahometan guide through Palestine, and whenever they came to a village that was very dirty, very poor, and inhabited by professed Christians, he always said, "These are not Moslems; they are *netza*," or "Nazarenes," throwing all the spite he possibly could into the word, as if he could not have uttered a more contemptuous term. To this day, then, our Lord has the name of the Nazarene affixed to him by those who reject him, and to this day Christians are called among Mahometans, *Nazarenes*.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was never ashamed of this name: in fact, he called himself "Jesus of Nazareth" after he had risen from the dead.

He told Paul when he smote him to the earth, "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." His disciples were not ashamed to call him by that name; for as they walked to Emmaus, and he joined them, and asked them what they were speaking of, they said they were talking of Jesus of Nazareth. This is a name at which devils tremble, for they besought him, even Jesus of Nazareth, that they should not be sent into the deep when he cast them out. It was the name which in contempt was nailed above his head upon the cross—"Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews." Oh, but it is a glorious name, as I shall have to show ere I have done. But still this is the meaning of it—the meaning of Matthew when he says that the prophets declared that he should be called a Nazarene. He meant that the prophets have described the Messiah as one that would be despised and rejected of men. They spoke of him as a great prince and conqueror when they described his second coming; but they set forth his first coming when they spoke of him as a root out of a dry ground without form or comeliness, who when he should be seen would have no beauty that men should desire him. The prophets said that he would be called by a despicable title, and it was so, for his countrymen called him a Nazarene.

I want you to notice our divine Redeemer's condescension, before I plunge further into this matter. It was a marvel that Jesus should live on this world at all. He who inhabits all things, whom space is not wide enough to contain, dwells on this poor, dusky planet. If he must dwell in this world, why is he born in Judæa? for though I am grieved it should be so, yet the Jews are a people greatly despised,—shame on Christians when they ever join in such despising. But still if Jesus must be a man in this world, why is he not born in Rome, in the capital of the nations? Why must it be in a little miserable country like Judæa? Yet if he shall be born in Judæa, why must he live in Galilee—that Bœotia of Israel, that most despicable part of Judæa? If he must live in Galilee, why not at Capernaum? Why does he choose Nazareth? Why must he go to the lowest of the low—that most despised place of a despised country? And if he must come to Nazareth,—follow him a step lower—why must he be a carpenter's son? Why, if he lives there, can he not be the son of the minister of the synagogue, or some respectable scribe? No; but he must be reputed to be a poor man's son. And then if he must be a carpenter's son, why can he not so constrain men's hearts that they shall receive him? for the deepest depth of all is that even as a carpenter's son his fellow citizens will not endure him; but they take him to the brow of the hill to cast him down headlong from the cliff whereon the city stood. Was there ever such condescension as that of the Saviour? If in the lowest depth there be a lower deep, he plunges into it for our sakes. He emptied himself. Our old version says, "He made himself of no reputation," but the new one is in this case much better,—*"He emptied himself."* Nothing was left him of honour or respect. He gave up all. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor"—poor to the last degree, poor in reputation. He was born a man, a Jew, a Galilean, a Nazarene.

You have gone down as far as language can descend; and I invite you now to think of *the way in which Jesus, the Nazarene, is still despised.* That shall be our first head. When we have thought upon that we will

say a little upon *his disciples*: the sect of the Nazarenes must expect to be despised till brighter days shall dawn. When we have talked about that we shall have to say in conclusion that there is *nothing despicable either in the Master or in the servants*, though they are called Nazarenes by a contemptuous world.

I. First, then, OUR MASTER, THE NAZARENE, WAS DESPISED, AND IS DESPISED EVEN TO THIS DAY.

He was despised, first, because in *his person*, his parentage, his state, his apparel, his language, his habits, there was nothing of grandeur, nothing of parade, nothing but what was simple, gentle, lowly. He did ride once, but it was on a colt, the foal of an ass. It was said, "Behold thy king cometh"; but his coming was meek and lowly. He might have been a king: he was very near being taken by force to be pushed up into a throne; but he withdrew himself, for he did not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets. He was no popularity-hunter, or flatterer of the great. He was no man of confusion and strife, who sought to push himself forward and tread down others. Those that opposed him were weak like bruised reeds; but he would not break them though he could have done it. They offended him with their weak arguments, for they were like a smoking flax to him; but he would not quench them. He left them for another day when he shall bring forth judgment unto victory. I suppose, if we had seen the Saviour, we should not have thought him "altogether lovely"; for his heavenly beauty was not of the kind that strikes the natural eye. Hence the impossibility of any painter ever being able to paint him, for though he must have been superlatively lovely, it must have been a beauty with which nobody would be charmed unless their eyes were opened to perceive the beauty of holiness. His was the loveliness of virtue, the charm of purity, and not that sensuous beauty which excites desire and kindles the passions of mankind. He was loveliness itself; but only to those who know what loveliness is. About his dress there was nothing remarkable. He wore the ordinary smock-frock of the country, a garment without seam, woven from the top throughout: a very serviceable, useful piece of work-day apparel, but possessing nothing in it of official dignity, or princely richness, to distinguish him from an ordinary person. As for the place where he lived, it was no bishop's palace, nor even an ordinary manse; for he had not where to lay his head.

He sought no dignity and no honour. As for his companionships, they were of the lowest, for it is said of him, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them"; "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him." The offcasts of society delighted in his discourses, and they gathered round him to receive blessings at his hand. He lifted them up from the dunghill, renewed them, and set them among princes. He was the last person in the world to be hampered by pride. There was nothing of the kind about him. He was the personification of love. He condescended, but he did not seem to condescend; for graciousness was natural to him. He did it so really that one almost forgot the condescension in the altogether naturalness of the way in which he sympathized with all grief, and helped all who came for succour. Hence the proud despised him. Those

who looked for dress and garb, as so many do in our day; those who looked for a show of learning, quotations from great writers, continual perplexities to human minds, could not see much in him. Those who wanted a display of power, a leader bold and brave to drive out the Romans, and play Judas Maccabeus for the people, turned away and said, "He is nothing but an ordinary Nazarene."

His followers, too, were another cause of the contempt poured upon him; for his chosen friends were to those who knew them nothing but common fishermen. Indeed, that is all they were. Unlearned and ignorant men they are said to have been, though they baffled the pretended wisdom of the age in which they lived. How could he have selected such followers? There were scribes, and there were Pharisees; there were Rabbis and Rabbonis; he might surely have called some of those to follow him; but, you see, the Saviour was not a preacher that at all attracted the *élite* of society. Those highly cultured minds, as a rule, went to hear Rabbi Simcon, the Pharisee, who expounded points of no earthly importance; but Jesus was one of whom it is written, "The common people heard him gladly." And so the wise ones ran him down as "a Nazarene." "Look," said they, "look and see who they are that he has chosen to be his chief helpers. See how the lower orders flock around him. They are no judges; what notion have they of profound learning and research? They like a man who is ignorant, for he is like themselves. They have no taste, they have no education, and so they gather to one of themselves." "Ah!" said one of these wisecracks, "I am ashamed of him—quite ashamed. Indeed, I shall speak to him, for he ought not to be so lost to all sense of propriety." And so he goes to the Master and says, "Do you hear the boys crying, 'Hosannah!' in the temple? Hearst thou what these say?" He thought that the Lord would be ashamed of having such admirers as mere street boys; but the Saviour answered, "Have you never read"—as if he was going to question this great man's reading—"have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he hath perfected praise"? He was not ashamed even of chits of children that strewed the pathway for him, nor ashamed of the sick and sinful people that gathered around him, nor ashamed of the poor fishermen that were the lieutenants of his salvation army; but rather did he rejoice therein, and say, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." But the higher classes, the refined and the cultivated, said, "Tush! he is nothing but a Nazarene."

Well, then, when they came to listen to *his doctrine* they were not a bit more pleased, nor did they hold him any higher in esteem. What do you think he taught them? Among other things it is reported that he said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God": and, would you believe it, he said this not to one of the lower order at all, but to a learned gentleman who was a ruler in Israel? Why, it has come to a pretty pass, this, to tell educated people, refined, æsthetic people, that they must be born again, or else they cannot see the kingdom of God—to insist upon regeneration as a thing as necessary to a philosopher as to a prostitute, as necessary to a senator as to a jail-bird;

as needful to the purest as to the most defiled. Oh no, we cannot bear such levelling doctrine! It is shocking. So they turned their backs to him and called him a Nazarene. When a man tells you unpalatable truth it is very easy and natural to call him bad names. If you cannot answer him anyhow else you can always answer him by reviling him.

And, then, what do you think he said beside that? On one occasion he had the audacity to say—and I am sure the Pharisees thought it was audacity indeed—“Except ye eat my flesh, and drink my blood, there is no life in you.” What could the man mean—that they, even they the sons of Abraham who were born free; the priests who had partaken of the sacrifices, must actually eat *him*? Did they think that they would accept *his* teaching as food for their souls? I wonder if they went as far as that in understanding him; but if they did they liked it no better. They were indignant that he should say that the only food for their souls must be himself; that unless he became their life, and the nourishment of that life; unless he became part and parcel of their very being, they could not be saved! Even those who did think a little of him said that after this they must give him up. They could not stand *that*, and so they walked no more with him.

He went even further. Why, he actually dared to tell the scribes and Pharisees who had fasted so many times in the week, and never ate bread without washing their hands, and tithed the mint and the cummin, that there was nothing in all this, and he said—“Ye blind guides, ye hypocrites, ye strain at a gnat, and ye swallow a camel.” He went on to tell them that all their outside religion was a lie and a falsehood unless the inner part of the soul were cleansed. He said that it was not that which a man ate or drank, but that which came out of the man that really defiled him. People said, “Did you ever hear such talk as that? Why, he is putting us all down, we that are the best people out. If we are not good, who can be?—we that are the leaders of society, the pink of perfection. We do swallow a widow’s house sometimes, but we always do that behind the door. It is true that we are not as clean inside as we should be; but then we always make clean the outside of the cup and platter. Nobody can say but what we do, and he has been talking against us; and at the same time he is inviting the fallen to himself, and saying, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’” “Well, well,” they said, “we cannot bear it: he is nothing but a Nazarene”; and so they turned their backs upon him.

Dear friends, to-day Jesus Christ is as much despised as ever by those ungodly and vain-glorious men who understand what his gospel is. How frequently you will find in the public newspapers, and in the magazines of those who think themselves the cultivated class, remarks against the doctrine of justification by faith. You and I are simpletons enough to believe that we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus, because God has told us so, and we sing—

“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling”;

and they tell us that this is inconsistent with public morality; that the masses ought to be told that unless they behave themselves they cannot

possibly go to heaven, and so on:—which thing they have been told times without number, and they have grown worse the more they have been told it. When we tell about free grace, which pardons the vilest through faith in Christ, men are changed, and made moral and holy, but our unbelieving critics choose to ignore all that, and go and talk against what is the very essence of the gospel of Christ, as though it were a poor, miserable thing, only fit for a set of fanatics to preach. “Only believe, and you shall be saved,” say they, “that is their absurd doctrine.” Thus, in other words, they repeat the old abuse, and call us Nazarenes.

But if you want to see the ungodly world foam at its mouth,—oh if you want to see rage get to its worst, and wish to see pretended learned men upon their mettle, preach the doctrine of atonement by blood! Tell them that remission of sin is by substitution—that Christ stood in the sinner's stead, and took the sinner's sin, and that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. See how they writhe and rage! They cannot bear this horrible doctrine of atonement by sacrifice; and yet, most learned sirs, it is upon that horrible atonement that our hope depends; it is upon that horrible doctrine that we hinge our destiny for time and for eternity; and we are not ashamed to bring it out with all plainness of speech, for the precious blood of Christ, God's dear Son, and that alone, cleanseth us from all sin. “Ah, well,” they say, “that is just the old story which your Puritan fathers used to tell; that is the old Methodist doctrine: that is your Presbyterianism, and as James the First said, Presbyterianism is no religion for a gentleman.” These learned men admire the broad-church school, where everything is taken to be true except the truth. Still Jesus is to the mass of mankind the despised Nazarene.

I will not dwell longer upon it, however, because you that know the Lord need not be told that he is to this day despised and rejected of men. Call yourself a Christian, and forget what Christianity is, and you will have easy times of it. Instead of preaching the simple gospel of Christ get fine music, and fix up fine shows, turn the place of worship into a conservatory, or a theatre, and there will be no persecution for you. Of course not, that is not Jesus Christ; but preach Jesus Christ, and see if all the dogs will not howl at you directly. You shall have ill names, and wicked stories, and all sorts of jests poured upon you. Go through the world as a respectable professor of religion, and never let fall a single distinctive truth from your lips, never perform one single distinctive action of Christianity, but just do as others do, and live as others do, and I will warrant you you shall be in a whole skin from the first of January to the end of December; but be a Christian, and live your Christianity and speak it out, and see how long you will be before they of your own house are at war with you. If we are true to the Master we shall find that we have not enlisted in a service which is all fine feathers and music, but stern fighting is to be done. There is war to be borne and hardness to be endured by every good soldier of the cross, for still Jesus is called the Nazarene.

II. But now, secondly, our other text informs us that CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS HAVE BEEN KNOWN AS THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES—that is to say, they must expect to bear a measure of the indignities poured upon their leader.

Dear young friends, I want to press some matters home upon you who have lately joined the church, and also upon you who love the Lord, but have never yet confessed it.

If you follow Christ fully you will be sure to be called by some ill name or other. For, first, they will say how *singular* you are. "Miss inheritance," says God, "is unto me as a speckled bird. The birds round about her are against her." If you become a true Christian you will soon be a marked man. They will say, "How odd he is!" "How singular she is!" They will think that we try to make ourselves remarkable, when, in fact, we are only conscientious, and are endeavouring to obey what we think to be the word of God. Oftentimes that is the form of contempt: practical Christians are set down as intentionally eccentric and wilfully odd. Mothers have brought that charge against daughters who have been faithful to Christ because they would not go into gaiety, or indulge in vain apparel; and many a working man has said it to his fellow man by way of accusation, "You must be different from anybody else." This difference, which God has made a necessity, men treat as a mere whim of our own. If we do not come out from among them, and be separate, we cannot expect to be housed beneath the wings of the Eternal; but if we do, we may reckon upon being regarded by those around us as strange, unfriendly creatures.

Then, again, they will say to the genuine Christian, "Why, you are so *old-fashioned*! Look at you now! You believe the same old things that they used to believe in Oliver Cromwell's day—those old Puritanical doctrines. Do you not know that the world has made a great progress since those times, and we have entered upon the nineteenth century; a wonderful century, never was century like it. There was only one Solomon centuries ago, but we are all Solomons now, the very least of us, while the greater ones far excel a thousand Solomons rolled into one. The nineteenth century! And here are you, you still stick to an old book that was written, half of it ages ago, and the other half is at least eighteen hundred years old! Will you never move with the times? Will you get as far as Moses, and Jesus, and John, and stick there?" Yes, exactly there. We go not an inch beyond Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. We try to hold fast the faith that was once delivered to the saints. In ordinances we hold to the olden baptism, and the ancient supper; in doctrine we abide by the truths which Paul taught among the Gentiles, for we feel that we cannot improve upon them. We would wish to exhibit the same spirit as Jesus Christ our Lord, for we know we shall never improve upon his perfections. Therefore they say, "You are so *old-fashioned*;" and we answer that for this we tender no apology.

When that form of criticism does not take effect they laugh at our *faith*. They say, "You simple-minded people have great capacity for believing! Look at us, we are far too sensible to believe anything. We do not feel sure about anything. What we think we know to-day we are not certain of; we are so receptive that we may learn the reverse to-morrow. We get our faith out of our own moral consciousness, and compel even the Scriptures to plead at the bar of our inward conceptions. We do not want to have things revealed to us and to have a book, and bind ourselves down to a book revelation; we are our own

teachers, judges, and infallible guides, and the very idea of absolutely certain truth is abhorred by us. As to this Spirit of God that you trust in, it is sheer enthusiasm. There is nothing in it, and we wonder that you should be so credulous, when instead of that you ought to be rational, and believe in Huxley and Tyndall. Do not be credulous and believe in God, but be rational and believe in Bradlaugh, and Voltaire, and Tom Paine." This is another sting for the Nazarenes, but happily it has small power to vex us, since our reverence for the authorities of modern wisdom is not sufficient to make us fear their scoffs. Time was when Christianity was opposed by men of real ability, masters in learning, but in the present age its antagonists are men of much smaller calibre, whose lack of argument is scantily concealed by the outrageous absurdities which they invent. Instead of attempting to overwhelm us by the weight of their learning, they endeavour to surprise us with unexpected hypotheses, which we are more inclined to ridicule than to refute; and then, with mock sobriety, they assert that our bewilderment is defeat. The spears of the phalanx of reason are seen no more, but the shafts of folly stand thick upon our shields. In this, also, we shall conquer through the blood of the Lamb. Meanwhile we leave sneers of contempt to those who are such masters of them. It is for Nazarenes to receive, but not to return, contumely.

Another arrow of contempt is the assertion that Christian people *have not their liberty*. "Look at you, you dare not go to the theatre; you dare not drink." "Why," says one man, "I like a jolly drink sometimes; and if I were a Christian, I could not enjoy that great privilege." No, friend, you certainly would lose that booze of yours. As far as we are concerned we have no ambition in that direction. Some of us know a little of what the amusements of the ungodly are, and we are astonished that you should be able to find content in them, for they do not suit our taste at all. We never envy hogs their wash. Let them have their trough well-filled as often as they please. We have no taste in that direction. But you need not say that we have no liberty because we do not feed out of the swine trough, for such liberty we never desired. We have liberty to serve God and do good, and this is the freedom which we covet. We have liberty to do as we like, for we like to do what God would have us do, and we pray that our likes may every day be more and more conformed to the liking of God. There is not much after all in the taunt, "You God-fearing people are cowardly; you dare not enjoy yourselves." We live daily so as to give this taunt the lie, for we are a happy people, a free people, even we who are of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Again, some turn round upon true Christians for their *not being very choise in their company*. If we associated only with the rich and great, whose society, as far as I know of it, is about the poorest thing out, we should then be acting properly. Keep to "society," and society will smile upon you; but if you attend meetings where you call a costermonger your brother, where the washerwoman is your sister, where so long as people love Christ you count them the best of company, then you are low and vulgar, a Philistine, or a Nazarene. If you are willing to be a true brother to a black man, or to one who is an outcast in

condition, who was actually seen with a broom sweeping a crossing, then, of course, you cannot expect to be recognised by anybody who is anybody. Listen to the world's ridicule of true Christian churches where there is real brotherly love and true fraternity. They cannot endure it. Well, they may do without it then, but this shall be my glory, that God has made of one blood all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth, and that where there is a touch of grace in any man, his dress and his rank are nothing to me. Real believers in Jesus are truly our brothers and sisters in Christ, however poor or however illiterate they may be. This is the very genius of Christianity. To the poor the gospel is preached: as soon as men enter into the church of Christ, all outward distinctions are forgotten, and they are one in the gracious family of God their Father. This, however, is the subject of contempt even among those who profess and call themselves Christians. Many of your fine ladies and gentlemen would not own Jesus himself if he were now upon earth, and as for his disciples, I am sure they would get the cold shoulder on all sides. I, for one, never expect to see saints fashionable, nor holiness popular: let us be content to be low and vulgar in men's esteem for the Lord's sake.

And then, if God's servants will preach the truth outright, or if not being preachers they will hold it, and dare to avow it, I warrant you they will soon meet with some contemptuous title or other. Pare down the gospel, cut away its angles, draw the lion's teeth, and then at once you shall be friends with the world; but hold the doctrines of grace, bring forth the atonement, speak out plainly, have your convictions and state them, and soon the hounds will be after you full cry. Say that the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of true Christians, and that we are not bound by prayer-books, synods, conferences, or anything of the kind, but only by the word of God, and you shall see what you shall see, for here and there and everywhere all sorts of people will be against you. Live a godly, gracious life, and you will not escape persecution. You may be happily circumstanced so as to live among earnest Christians, and so escape persecution—but take the average Christian man in this city, and he will have a hard time of it if he is faithful, and he will be pointed at by some opprobrious name or other, something like Paul was when they said he was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

III. Now, listen to me as I close. **THERE IS, AFTER ALL, NOTHING DESPICABLE IN EITHER CHRIST OR HIS PEOPLE.** I feel half ashamed to say such a thing, or that it should ever be necessary to be said that there is nothing to despise in Jesus. What is there to be ashamed of in him? He is the Son of the Highest. He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and if he stooped—and stoop he did—and became lower than the lowest by the sufferings of death, even the death of the cross, he did it out of such glorious disinterestedness of kindness to fallen men, that he is thereby revealed as the grandest of all characters. His is the sublimest of all lives. Angels have never ceased to wonder and adore, and even the enemies of Christ have often been struck dumb as they have seen the splendour of the love that moved him to stoop so low. And what if he has revealed a plain gospel? Would you have the illiterate left out in the cold? What if he did preach the gospel

to sinners? Who wanted the gospel but sinners? What if he did not flatter the pride of those who thought themselves good? Is it not true that "the whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick"? For my part, I bless my Master that he has given us a common-place gospel. Sublime it is beyond sublimity, but plain it is so that a little child may understand it. A man with slender wit may find his way to heaven guided by the light of the Holy Spirit, and this is one of the grandest proofs of the profound wisdom of God. Glory be to Jesus Christ that he did not come here to tantalize the multitude by a gospel only suitable to the *élite*, that he did not come here to proclaim doctrines that could only be learned in the universities, and could never be understood except by such men as Isaac Newton or Robert Boyle. I bless the name of Jesus that he came to give a gospel to the poor and needy, to the simple and the childlike; and while I do it, I feel that I hear him saying again, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

The practical point is this: *there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a Christian*. I am afraid that there are some Christians that we have need to be ashamed of, and that we ourselves do many unworthy things. Christians ought to be reflections of Christ, but I fear they often cast reflections upon Christ. Oh ye that despise Christ, when you find out our faults, and speak against us for them, you treat us justly, and we cannot complain; but why lay our crimes at our Saviour's door? If you find us false to our profession, if we are not like our Master, if we are not true to him, you may well ridicule us, and we cannot answer you. We must be beaten as with whips of scorpions when we are untrue to our Leader; but why blame *him*?

The fact is that the ungodly revile those who are true to the Lord Jesus. Well, when they do, there is nothing in that to be ashamed of. What if I believe the truth! shall I be ashamed of it? What if I fear God! shall I be ashamed of it? Let those be ashamed who do not fear him. What if I believe in prayer! What if I receive answers to prayer! Shall I blush about that? Let those blush to scarlet who never pray, or have no God to hear their prayers.

Shall I be ashamed because I try to do what is right, and have a conscience before God, and cannot enjoy loose pleasures, or listen to lascivious song? Shall I be ashamed of chastity and truth? Why then let angels be ashamed of purity; let the stars be ashamed of light; let the sun be ashamed of day. There is nothing to be ashamed of in things honourable and of good repute. What are some of you at—you who are, I trust, Christians, that you never come out and own your religion? What will your Master say to you in the day of his appearing? What honour can you expect to share with him if you will not share his shame? If any man wants to spit on Christ, let him do me the honour to spit on me. If any man will rail on Christ, let him do me the pleasure to rail on me, for if I may stand between him and my Master, I shall be promoted by the deed. Napoleon's Mamaluke flung himself in the way of the bullet to save the emperor's life. Shall not Christ be served after that fashion? Shall we not be willing to be Nazarenes for the Nazarene? Shall we not glory to be despised and

rejected of men for his sake, if by any means we may bring honour to him? I trust it shall be so; and yet some of you have not even been baptized into his name, though you know that it is his command. You have never joined with his people in church fellowship, and yet wish to share their joys. You let them fight the battle alone. You think, I suppose, to sink into heaven by the back door, and not to be found among the soldiers of Christ till the crowns are distributed? Ah, sirs, you miss a great honour in not standing shoulder to shoulder with the rank and file of Christ's chosen. Angels would leave heaven if they could, to come and fight for Christ. They would be glad to leave their rest to bear the hardness which a follower of Christ must endure for his dear Captain's sake. Jesus is coming! He is on his way! He may come to-night. He may come before another Sabbath's bells shall ring; and oh if I have never confessed him, if I have been ashamed of him, how shall I face him? Hear this, ye cowards! What will you say when he appeareth? Be wise and confess him betimes. Come ye out from among the ungodly. Be ye separate. Confess your Lord and Master. "He that with his heart believeth, and with his mouth maketh confession of him, shall be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be damned." God save us from being ashamed of the Nazarene. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Matthew ii. 5—23;
John i. 43—46; Luke iv. 16—32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—625, 263, 807.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

Mentone, November 24, 1831.

DEAR FRIENDS,—Since the issue of last week's sermon I have been attacked according to the fashion of former years; but through the goodness of God, in answer to the prayers of many, I hope to escape a protracted illness. A gentle voice by these light afflictions whispers to us gratitude, and reminds us that "we are but dust." Even in this winterless land the leaves must wither, and in every condition trial and sickness may come. Our joy is that over against the peril we can place a security: we may be sorrowful, but we must be safe. All things *may* work together for grief, but all things *must* work together for good. Let the Father's will be the children's delight.

Hoping soon to return to my beloved work and daily ministry,

I am, yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SARAH AND HER DAUGHTERS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 28TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you.”—Isaiah li. 2.

“Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”—1 Peter iii. 6.

I DESIRE to thank God for having had the privilege of preaching in Exeter Hall yesterday to a large congregation from the whole of the second verse of the fifty-first of Isaiah,—“Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.”* On that occasion I confined my remarks to Abraham, and tried to make prominent the facts that God called him while he was a heathen man, one man, and a lone man, and yet he blessed him, and made him the founder of his people, multiplying his seed as the stars and as the sand by the sea-shore. I devoutly beseech the Lord to accept my testimony to his power, and to increase the faith of the many of his servants to whom I spoke on that occasion. His Holy Spirit gave me the word; may he cause his saints to feed upon it.

Now, I never like to do an injustice to anybody, and I feel that I did not in that sermon speak sufficiently about Sarah, though I did not quite forget her. Let us make up for our omissions. If we had Abraham at Exeter Hall yesterday morning, we will have Sarah at the Tabernacle to-night, and, may be, we shall learn a lesson from her holy character as well as from that of her husband, and the two lessons combined may go to the perfecting of each other. May our great teacher, the Holy Spirit, now instruct us.

To begin with, let us note *what a happy circumstance it is when a godly, gracious man has an equally godly and gracious wife*. It is ill when there is a difference, a radical difference, between husband and wife,—when one fears God, and the other has no regard to him. What a pain it is to a Christian woman to be yoked with an unbelieving husband. In a case which I remember the husband lived all his life indifferent to divine things, while the wife was an earnest Christian woman, and saw all her children grow up in the ways of the Lord. The father lived unregenerate, and died without giving any testimony of a change of heart.

* See No. 1596, preached on behalf of the Baptist Missionary Society on the morning of April 27, 1881.

When our sister speaks of him, it is with fearful anguish ; she does not know what to say, but leaves the matter in the hands of God, often sighing, "O that, by a word or a look, I could have been enabled to indulge a hope that my poor husband looked to Jesus at the last." The same must be the case of a husband who has an ungodly wife. However much God may bless him in all other respects, there seems to be a great miss there, as if a part of the sun were eclipsed,—that a part of life which should be all light left in thick darkness. Oh, let those of us who have the happiness of being joined together in the Lord thank and bless God every time we remember each other. Let us pray God that, having such a privilege, so that our prayers are not hindered by irreligious partners, we may never hinder our prayers ourselves : God grant that we may give unto his name great glory because of his choice favour to us in this respect. Abraham had cause to praise God for Sarah, and Sarah was grateful for Abraham. I have not the slightest doubt that Sarah's character owed its excellence very much to Abraham : I should not wonder, however, if we discover when all things are revealed that Abraham owed as much to Sarah. They probably learned from each other ; sometimes the weaker comforted the stronger, and often the stronger sustained the weaker. I should not wonder if a mutual interchange of their several graces tended to make them both rich in the things of God. Mayhap Abraham had not been all that Abraham was if Sarah had not been all that Sarah was. Our first text bids us, "Look to Sarah," and we do look on her, and we thank God if we, like Abraham, are favoured with holy consorts, whose amiable tempers and loving characters tend to make us better servants of God.

We notice, next, as we look to Sarah, that *God does not forget the lesser lights*. Abraham shines like a star of the first magnitude, and we do not at first sight observe that other star, with light so bright and pure, shining with milder radiance but with kindred lustre, close at his side. The light of Mamre, which is known under the name of Abraham, resolves itself into a double star when we apply the telescope of reflection and observation. To the common eye Abraham is the sole character, and ordinary people overlook his faithful spouse, but God does not overlook. Our God never omits the good who are obscure. You may depend upon it that there is no such difference in the love of God towards different persons as should make him fix his eye only upon those that are strong, and omit those who are weak. Our eyes spy out the great things, but God's eye is such that nothing is great with him, and nothing is little. He is infinite, and therefore nothing bears any comparison to him. You remember how it is written that he who telleth the stars, and calleth them by name, also bindeth up the broken in heart, and healeth all their wounds. He who treasures the names of his apostles, notes also the women that followed in his train. He who marks the brave confessors and the bold preachers of the gospel also remembers those helpers who labour quietly in the gospel in places of retirement into which the hawk's eye of history seldom pries. Let, therefore, those here present, who count themselves to be of the tribe of Benjamin, to be little in Israel, never be discouraged on that account,—for the Lord is too great to despise the little ones. Ye are not forgotten of God, O ye who are overlooked by men. The Lord's eye is upon the creeping things innumerable in the great sea

as well as upon leviathan: he will observe you. If he sends the deluging showers that make strong the cedars, which are full of sap, and adorn the brow of Lebanon, so doth he send to each tiny blade of grass its own drop of dew. God forgets not the less in his care for the greater. Sarah was in life covered with the shield of the Almighty as well as Abraham, her husband: in death she rested in the same tomb; in heaven she has the same joy; in the book of the Lord she has the same record.

Next notice that *it would be well for us to imitate God in this*: in not forgetting the lesser lights. I do not know that great men are often good examples. I am sorry when, because men have been clever and successful, they are held up to imitation, though their motives and morals have been questionable. I would sooner men were stupid and honest than clever and tricky; it is better to act rightly and fail altogether than succeed by falsehood and cunning. I would sooner bid my son imitate an honest man who has no talent, and whose life is unsuccessful, than point him to the cleverest and greatest that ever lived, whose life has become a brilliant success, but whose principles are condemnable. Learn not from the great but from the good: be not dazzled by success, but follow the safer light of truth and right. But so it is that men mainly observe that only which is written in big letters; but you know the choicest part of God's books are printed in small characters. They who would only know the rudiments may spell out the words in large type which are for babes; but those who want to be fully instructed must sit down and read the small print of God, given us in lives of saints whom most men neglect. Some of the choicest virtues are not so much seen in the great as in the quiet, obscure life. Many a Christian woman manifests a glory of character that is to be found in no public man. I am sure that many a flower that is "born to blush unseen," and, as we think, to "waste its fragrance on the desert air," is fairer than the beauties which reign in the conservatory, and are the admiration of all. God has ways of producing very choice things on a small scale. As rare pearls and precious stones are never great masses of rock, but always lie within a narrow compass, so full often the fairest and richest virtues are to be found in the humblest individuals. A man may be too great to be good, but he cannot be too little to be gracious. Do not, therefore, always be studying Abraham, the greater character. Does not the text say, "Look unto Abraham, your father, and unto Sarah that bare you"? You have not learned the full lesson of patriarchal life until you have been in the tent with Sarah as well as among the flocks with her husband.

Furthermore, another reflection arises, namely, that *faith reveals itself in various ways*. Faith makes one person this, and another that. Faith in Noah makes him a shipbuilder, and the second of the world's great fathers. Faith in Abraham makes him a pilgrim and a stranger. Faith in Moses makes him plague Egypt, and feed a nation forty years in the wilderness. Faith in David makes him kill a giant, save a kingdom, and ascend a throne. Faith in Samson makes him slay a thousand Philistines, and in Rahab it makes her save two Israelites. Faith has many ways of working, and it works according to the condition and position of the person in whom it dwells. Sarah does not become Abraham, nor does Abraham become Sarah. Faith in Isaac does not make

him the same royal man as Abraham: he is always tame and gentle rather than great and noble; he comes in like a valley between the two great hills of Abraham and Jacob. Isaac is Isaac, and Isaac has such virtue as becomes him whom the Lord loved; and Jacob, too, is Jacob, and not his father; he is active, and energetic, and far-seeing. God does not by his grace lift us out of our place. A man is made gentle, but he is not made a fool. A woman is made brave, but grace never made her masterful and domineering. Grace does not make the child so self-willed that he disobeys his father;—it is something else that does that. Grace does not take away from the father his authority to command the child. It leaves us where we were, in a certain sense, as to our position, and the fruit it bears is congruous to that position. Thus Sarah is beautified with the virtues that adorn a woman, while Abraham is adorned with all the excellences which are becoming in a godly man. According as the virtue is required, so is it produced. If the circumstances require courage, God makes his servant heroic; if the circumstances require great modesty and prudence, modesty and prudence are given. Faith is a wonderful magician's wand; it works marvels, it achieves impossibilities, it grasps the incomprehensible. Faith can be used anywhere—in the highest heaven touching the ear of God, and winning our desire of him, and in the lowest places of the earth amongst the poor and fallen, cheering and upraising them. Faith will quench the violence of fire, turn the edge of the sword, snatch the prey from the enemy and turn the alien to flight. There is nothing which it cannot do. It is a principle available for all times, to be used on all occasions, suitable to be used by all men for all holy ends. Those who have been taught the sacred art of believing God are the truly learned: no degree of the foremost university can equal in value that which comes with much boldness in the faith. We shall see to-night that if Abraham walks before God and is perfect—if he smites the kings that have carried Lot captive, if he does such deeds of prowess as become a man—the selfsame faith makes Sarah walk before God in her perfectness, and she performs the actions which become her womanhood, and she too is written among the worthies of faith who magnified the Lord.

We are led by our second text to look at *the fruit of faith in Sarah*. There were two fruits of faith in Sarah,—she did well and she was not afraid with any amazement. We will begin with the first.

It is said of her that SHE DID WELL, "whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well."

She did well as a *wife*. She was all her husband could desire, and when, at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven years, she at last fell on sleep, it is said that Abraham not only mourned for her, but the old man wept for her most true and genuine tears of sorrow. He wept for the loss of one who had been the life of his house. As a wife she did well. All the duties that were incumbent upon her as the queen of that travelling company were performed admirably, and we find no fault mentioned concerning her in that respect.

She did well as a *hostess*. It was her duty, as her husband was given to hospitality, to be willing to entertain his guests; and the one instance of it is, no doubt, the representation of her common mode of proceeding. Though she was truly a princess, yet she kneaded the dough

and prepared the bread for her husband's guests. They came suddenly, but she had no complaint to make. She was, indeed, always ready to lay herself out to perform that which was one of the highest duties of a God-fearing household in those primitive times.

She did well also as a *mother*. We are sure she did, because we find that her son Isaac was so excellent a man; and you may say what you will, but in the hand of God the mother forms the boy's character. Perhaps the father unconsciously influences the girls, but the mother has evidently most influence over the sons. Any of us can bear witness that it is so in our own case. There are exceptions, of course; but, for the most part, the mother is the queen of the son, and he looks up to her with infinite respect if she be at all such as can be respected. Sarah by faith did her work with Isaac well, for from the very first, in his yielding to his father when he was to be offered up as a sacrifice, we see in him evidence of a holy obedience and faith in God which were seldom equalled, and were never surpassed.

Besides that, it is written that God said of Abraham, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him." There is one trait in Abraham's character that, wherever he went, he set up an altar unto the Lord. His rule was, a tent and an altar. Dear friends, do you always make these two things go together—a tent and an altar? Where you dwell is there sure to be family worship there? I am afraid that many families neglect it, and often it is so because husband and wife are not agreed about it, and I feel sure that there would not have been that invariable setting up of the worship of God by Abraham in his tent unless Sarah had been as godly as himself.

She did well, also, as a *believer*, and that is no mean point. As a believer when Abraham was called to separate himself from his kindred, Sarah went with him. She would adopt the separated life too, and the same caravan which travelled across the desert with Abraham for its master had Sarah for its mistress. She continued with him, believing in God with perseverance. Though they had no city to dwell in, she continued the roaming life with her husband, looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." She believed God's promise with all her heart, for though she laughed once, because when the promise neared its realization it overwhelmed her; it was but a slip for the moment, for it is written by the apostle in the eleventh of Hebrews, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." It was not by nature, but by faith, that Isaac was born, the child of another sort of laughter than that of doubt, the child according to the promise of God. She was a believing woman, then, and she lived a believing life; and so she did well.

She did well to her parents, well to her husband, well to her household, well to her guests, well before her God. Oh, that all professing Christian people had a faith that showed itself in doing well!

But never let it be forgotten that, though we preach faith, faith, faith, as the great means of salvation, yet we never say that you are saved unless there is a change wrought in you, and good works are produced in you; for "faith without works is dead, being alone." Faith saves,

but it is the faith which causes men to do well; and if there be a faith (and there is such a faith) which leaves a man just what he was, and permits him to indulge in sin, it is the faith of devils; perhaps not so good as that, for "the devils believe and tremble," whereas these hypocrites profess to believe, and yet dare to defy God, and seem to have no fear of him whatsoever. Sarah had this testimony from the Lord, that she did well; and her daughters ye are, all of you who believe, if ye do well. Be no discredit to your queenly mother. Take care that you honour your spiritual parentage, and maintain the high prestige of the elect family.

The point that I am to dwell upon just now is this, that she proved her faith by a second evidence,—SHE WAS "NOT AFRAID WITH ANY AMAZEMENT." The text says, "whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

She was calm and quiet, and was not put in fear by any terror. There were several occasions in which she might have been much disquieted and put about. The first was in the breaking-up of her house life. You see her husband, Abraham, gets a call to go from Ur of the Chaldees. Well, it is a considerable journey, and they move to Haran. There are some women—unbelieving women—who would not have understood that. Why does he want to go away from the land in which he lives, and from all our kindred, away to Haran? That would have been her question had she not been a partaker in her husband's faith. An unbelieving woman would have said, "A call from God? Nonsense! Fanaticism! I do not believe in it," and when she saw that her husband would go she would have been afraid with great amazement. When Abraham went to Haran with his father Terah, and Terah died in Haran, and then God called him to go further, they had to cross the Euphrates and get right away into a land which he knew nothing of, and this must have been a sterner trial still. When they packed up their goods on the camels and on the asses, and started with their train of servants and sheep and cattle, she might very naturally have said, if she had been an unbelieving woman, "Where are you going?" "I do not know," says Abraham. "What are you going for? What are you going to get?" "I do not know," says Abraham, "God has bidden me go, but where I am going to, I do not know; and what I am going for I cannot exactly say, save that God has said, 'Get thee out from thy country and thy kindred, and I will bless thee and multiply thee, and give thee a land wherein thou shalt dwell.'" We do not read that Sarah ever asked these questions, or was ever troubled at all about them. The things were put on the camels' backs, and away she journeyed, for God had called her husband to go, and she resolved to go with him. Through floods or flames, it mattered not to her, she felt safe with her husband's God, and calmly journeyed on. She was not afraid with any amazement.

Then, though we do not hear much about her, we know that all those years she had to live in a tent. You know the man is out abroad attending to his business, and he does not know much about the discomforts of home, not even in such homes as ours. But if you were called to give up your houses and go and live in tents, well, the master might not mind it, but the mistress would. It is a very

trying life for a housewife. Sarah travelled from day to day, and what with the constant moving of the tent, as the cattle had to be taken to fresh pastures, it must have been a life of terrible discomfort; yet Sarah never said a word about it. Up to-morrow morning; every tent-pin up; and all the canvas rolled away, for you must move to another station. The sun scorches like an oven, but you must ride across the plain; or if the night is cold with frost and heavy dews, still canvas is your only wall and roof. Remember, they were dwelling in tents as pilgrims and strangers, not for one day, or two, nor for a few days in a year, but for scores of years at a stretch. It was bravely done by this good woman that she was not afraid with any amazement.

Besides, they did not live in a country where they were all alone, or surrounded by friends, for the tribes around them were all of other religions and of other tastes and ways, and they would have slain Abraham and killed the whole company, if it had not been for a sort of fear that fell upon them, by which Jehovah seemed to say to them, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." The patriarch and his wife dwelt in the midst of enemies, and yet they were not afraid; but if she had not been a believing woman she must have often been afraid with great amazement.

And then there was a special time when the old man, Abraham, put on his harness and went to war. He hears that Chedorlaomer has come down with tributary kings and swept away the cities of the plain, and taken captive his nephew, Lot. Abraham says, "I will go and deliver him;" and she might have said, "My husband, you are an old man. Those grey locks should not be touched with the stains of warfare." She said nothing of the sort, but doubtless cheered him on and smiled as he invites some of his neighbours that dwelt near to go with him. She is under no distress that her husband is gone, and all the herdsmen and servants round about the tents all gone, so that she is left alone with her women servants. No; she sits at home as a queen, and fears no robbers, calmly confident in her God. Abraham has gone to battle, and she fears not for him, and she needs not, for he smites the kings, and they are given like driven stubble to his bow, and he comes back laden with spoil. God was pleased with Sarah's quiet faith, because in troublous times she was not afraid with any amazement.

Then there came, a little while after, that great trial of faith which must have touched Sarah, though its full force fell on her husband. She observed the sudden disappearance of her husband and his servant. "Where is your master? He does not come in to breakfast." The servants say, "He was up a great while before day, and he has gone with the servant, and with the ass, and with Isaac." He had not told her; for Abraham had struggled enough with himself to take Isaac away to the mountain and offer him, and he could not bear to repeat the struggle in Sarah. He was gone without telling Sarah of his movements. This was a new state of things for her. He did not return all day "Where has your master gone? I never knew him go away before without informing me. And where is Isaac?" Oh, that Isaac! How she feared for her jewel, her delight, the child of promise, the wonder of her old age. He did not come home that night, nor Abraham either; nor the next day, nor the next. Three days passed, and I can hardly picture the

anxiety that would have fallen upon any one of you if you had been Sarah, unless you had enjoyed Sarah's faith, for by faith in this trying case she was not afraid with any amazement. I dare say it took three days for Abraham to come back again, so that it was a week nearly, and no Abraham and no Isaac. One would have thought she would have wandered about, crying, "Where is my husband, and where is my son?" But not so. She calmly waited, and said within herself, "If he has gone, he has gone upon some necessary errand, and he will be under God's protection; and God who promised to bless him and to bless his seed will not suffer any evil to harm him. So she rested quietly, when others would have been in dire dismay. She was not afraid with any amazement. We hear so little said about Sarah, that I am obliged thus to picture what I feel she must have been, because human nature is so like itself, and the effect of events upon us is very like the effect which would have been produced upon the mind of Sarah.

Now, this is a point in which Christian women, and, for the matter of that, Christian men also, should seek to imitate Sarah: we should not let our hearts be troubled, but rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him.

What is this virtue? It is a calm, quiet trusting in God. It is freedom from fear, such as is described in another place in these words: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." Or, as we read in David's words the other night, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." It is composure of mind, freedom from anxiety, the absence of fretfulness, and clean deliverance from alarm; so that, whatever happens, trepidation does not seize upon the spirit, but the heart keeps on at its own quiet pace, delighting itself in a faithful God. This is the virtue which is worth a king's ransom, and Sarah had it. "Whose daughters ye are if ye are not afraid with any amazement."

When is this virtue to be exercised by us? Well, it should be exercised at all times. If we are not self-composed when we are happy we are not likely to be calm when we are sad. I notice that if I am at all pleased with the praise of a friend, I become in that degree open to be grieved by the censure of a foe. By so much as you are elated by prosperity, by so much are you likely to be depressed when adversity comes; but if you are calm, quiet, happy—no more than that—when everything goes well, then you will be calm, quiet, happy—not less than that—when everything goes ill. To keep up an equable frame of mind is a thing to aim at, even as the gardener desires an even temperature for his choice flowers. You enquire, *Who are to exercise this virtue?* We are all to do so; but the text is specially directed to the sisterhood. I suppose women are exhorted to it, because some of them are rather excitable, a little hysterical, and apt to be fearfully depressed and utterly carried away. I am not saying that this fault is general or common among women, neither am I blaming them, but only stating the fact that some are thus afflicted, and it is a happy, happy thing if they can master it, so that they are not afraid with any amazement.

But this virtue especially serves in *time of trouble*, when a very serious trial threatens us. Then the Christian is not to say, "What shall I do now? I shall never endure it. I cannot live through it. Surely God

has forgotten me. This trouble will crush me. I shall die of a broken heart." No. No. No. Do not talk so. My dear friend, do not talk so. If you are God's child do not even think so. Try in patience to lift up your head, and remember Sarah, "whose daughters ye are if ye are not afraid with any amazement."

And so must it be in times of *personal sickness*. How many are the pains and sufferings that fall to the lot of the sisterhood! But if you have faith you will not be afraid with any amazement. I saw one the other day who was about to suffer from the surgeon's knife. It was a serious operation, about which all stood in doubt; but I was happy to see her as composed in the prospect of it as though it had been a pleasure rather than a pain. Thus calmly resigned should a Christian be. I went to see yesterday an aged sister—a member of this church, close upon fourscore years of age: she is dying with dropsy, and, being unable to lie down in bed, is obliged to sit up always—a posture which allows little or no rest. When I entered her room she welcomed me most heartily, which, perhaps was not wonderful, for she was greatly attached to her minister; the wonder lay in the fact that she expressed herself as being full of happiness, full of delight, full of expectancy of being with Christ. I went to comfort her; but she comforted me. What could I say? She talked of the goodness of God with an eye as full of pleasure as if she had been a maiden speaking to her young companion of her marriage day. Our sister used to sit just there, in yonder pew. I seem to see her sitting there now, but she will soon sit among the bright ones in heaven. I was charmed to see one with such evident marks of long-continued pain upon her face, but with such sweet serenity there too—yea, with more than serenity—with unspeakable joy in the Lord, such as I fear some in health and strength have not yet learned. A Christian woman should not be afraid with any amazement either in adversity or in sickness, but her holy patience should prove her to be a true daughter of Sarah and Abraham.

Christian women in Peter's day were subject to *persecution* as much as their husbands. They were shut up in prison, scourged, tortured, burned, or slain with the sword. One holy woman in the early days of the church was tossed upon the horns of bulls; another was made to sit in a red-hot iron chair: thus were they tortured, not accepting deliverance. In the early days of martyrdom the women played the man as well as the men. They defied the tyrant to do his worst upon their mortal bodies, for their conquering spirits laughed at every torment. If persecuting times should come again, or if they are here already in some measure, O daughters of Sarah, do well, and be not afraid with any amazement.

And so if you should be called to some *stern duty*, if you should be bound to do what you feel you cannot do, recollect that anybody can do what he can do. It is the believing man who does what he cannot do. We achieve impossibilities by the power of the Almighty God. Be not afraid, then, of any duty, but believe that you will be able to do it, for grace will be sufficient for you.

At last, in the prospect of death, my dear friends, may you not be afraid with any amazement! Oftentimes a death-bed is vantage-ground for a Christian. Where others show their fear, and sometimes their terror,

there should the believer show his peacefulness and his happy expectancy, not afraid with any amazement, whatever the form of death may be.

Now, *what is the excellence of this virtue?* I shall answer that question by saying it is *due to God* that we should not be afraid with any amazement. Such a God as we have ought to be trusted. Under the shadow of such a wing fear becomes a sin. If God were other than he is we might be afraid; but while he is such a God it is due to him that fear be banished. Peacefulness is true worship. Quiet under alarming conditions is devotion. He worships best who is most calm in evil times.

Moreover, the excellence of this virtue is that it is *most impressive to men*. I do not think anything is more likely to impress the ungodly than the quiet peace of mind of a Christian in danger or near to death. If we can be happy then, our friends will ask, "What makes them so calm?" Nor is the usefulness confined to others. It is *most useful to ourselves*; for he who can be calm in time of trouble will be most likely to make his way through it. When you once become afraid you cannot judge wisely as to your best course. You generally do wrong when you are frightened out of your confidence in God. When the heart begins palpitating, then the whole system is out of order for the battle of life. Be calm, and watch your opportunity. Napoleon's victories were to a large extent due to the serenity of that masterly warrior; and, depend upon it, it is so with you Christian people: you will win if you can wait. Do not be in a hurry. Consider what you should do. Do not be so alarmed as to make haste. Be patient; be quiet; wait God's time, and so wait your own time. Wait upon God to open your mouth. Ask him to guide your hand, and to do everything for you. Calmness of mind is the mother of prudence and discretion; it gives the firm foothold which is needful for the warrior when he is about to deal a victorious blow. Those who cannot be amazed by fear shall live to be amazed with mercy.

"How," says one, "*can we obtain it?*" That is the question. Recollect, it is an outgrowth of faith, and you will have it in proportion as you have faith. Have faith in God and you will not be afraid with any amazement. Very early in my preaching days I had faith in God in times of thunderstorm. When I have walked out to preach, it has happened that I have been wet through with the storm, and yet I have felt no annoyance from the thunder and lightning. On one occasion I turned in by reason of the extreme severity of the rain to a little lone cottage, and I found a woman there with a child who seemed somewhat relieved when she had admitted me, but previously she had been crying bitterly with sheer alarm and terror. "Why," she said, "this is a little round lodge-house, and the lightning comes in at every window. There is no place into which I can get to hide it from my eyes." I explained to her that I liked to see the lightning, for it showed me that an explosion was all over, and since I had lived to see the flash it was clear it could now do me no harm. I told her that to hear the thunder was a splendid thing, it was only God saying, "It is all over." If you live to see the lightning flash there is nothing to be afraid of; you would have been dead, and never have seen it, if it had been sent to kill you. I tried to console her on religious grounds, and I remember well praying with her and making her happy as a bird. It was my being so calm and

quiet and praying with her that cheered her up; and when I went on my way I left her in peace. You may depend upon it, my dear friends, that unless our own souls have peace we cannot communicate it to others. In this way we must believe in God about everything. It so happened that about that matter—the thunder and lightning—I did believe in God up to the very last degree, and therefore I could not be alarmed on that score; so if you believe in God upon any other subject, whatever it is, you will have perfect peace with God about it. If you can believe God when you are in a storm at sea, that he holds the water in the hollow of his hand, you will be at peace about the tempest. It is the thing that troubles you that you must believe about; and when faith makes an application of her hand to the particular trial then will peace of mind come to you.

This holy calm comes, also, *from walking with God*. No spot is so serene as the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High. Commune with God, and you will forget fear. Keep up daily fellowship with Christ in prayer, in praise, in service, in searching the word, in submitting your heart to the work of the eternal Spirit: and as you walk with God, you will find yourself calm. You know how our poet puts it:—

“Oh for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame.”

These go together.

If you would feed upon certain truths which will produce this calm of mind, recollect, first, that God is full of love, and therefore nothing that God sends can harm his child. Take everything from the Lord as a love-token, even though it be a stroke of his rod, or a cut of his knife. Everything from that dear hand must mean love, for he has said, “I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” When you accept every affliction as a love-token, then will your fear be ended.

Next, remember the faithfulness of God to his promise, and the fact that there is a promise for your particular position. The Lord is at this moment under promise to you, and that promise is registered in his book. Search it out, and then grasp it, and say, “He must keep it; he cannot break his word.” He has said, “In six troubles I will be with you.” Have you got to number six? He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” and how can he run back from his word? If he do not leave thee nor forsake thee, what canst thou fear? Whatever is coming—poverty, sickness, shame, slander—if all the devils in hell are loosed, and they are all coming up against us at once, yet, if the Lord be with us, we will smite them hip and thigh and send them back again to the infernal deep as quickly as the swine of old ran down a steep place into the sea and were choked in the waters. “Oh,” says the devil, “I can overcome you.” We say nothing to him but this—“You know your master; you know your master. Lie down, sir! You know your master, and that master is our covenant Head, our Husband, and our Lord.” Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil shall be able to overcome us, since we have the promise of a faithful God to protect us.

Many of you here to-night have grey hair, or bald heads. I have always such a large proportion of aged people in my congregation that I can say to you what I might not say to the young folk. We, dear friends,

ought not to be afraid, for trials are no novelties with us; we have ~~not~~ powder, and been grimed with the dust of the conflict times out of mind. We ought not to be troubled; we have been to sea before. And has not the Lord helped us? Tell it to his honour! He has been a very present help. He has borne us through such things that to doubt him would be an impudent slander upon his character. As for myself—and I suppose the language I now use would come from the lips of many here—my way has been strewn with wonders of divine mercy. Trials have abounded, and I am glad that they have: they have been opportunities for the display of divine grace. Labours have been attempted of which some said, "these are visionary schemes." But God has always been better than our faith. We have never been confounded, and I think we ought by this time to have learned that trusting in God is the most reasonable thing that we ever do. There are speculations in business, risks even in the most solid trading; but there is no speculation in believing God, no risk in trusting in him. He that hangeth the world upon nothing, and yet keepeth it in its place, can bring his people to have nothing, and yet to possess all things. He that makes yon arch of heaven stand secure without a buttress or a prop—a mighty arch such as no human engineer could ever contrive—he can make us stand without helpers, without friends, without riches, without strength, and stand, too, when all things else except that which God supports shall have come down in the final crash. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." I pray for you who are most timid, that from this day you may be true daughters of Sarah, and not be afraid with any amazement. God bless you with this gracious help, and you will praise his name. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis xviii.;
1 Peter iii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—737, 685, 682.

THIS sermon is revised at Mentone, and the preacher is happy to say that he is receiving rapid restoration through perfect rest. The Lord's goodness in moving friends to send in help to the various enterprises, and his grace in blessing special services, have kept the pastor's mind free from anxiety, and thus supplied the best form of repose.

Friends who read these sermons regularly are reminded that a Bazaar will be held at the Tabernacle, during the first week of the coming year, to provide further buildings for the Girls' Orphanage. It is hoped that each reader will have a brick in the wall. Monies are to be sent to C. H. Spurgeon, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood; and parcels of goods to V. J. Charlesworth, The Orphanage, Stockwell, London.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BRIDE AND HER ORNAMENTS: THE SIN OF FORGETTING GOD.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 4TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.”—Jeremiah ii. 32.

It is a clear proof of the great love of God to his people that he will not lose their love without earnest expostulation. When you do not care at all for a person, he may love you or hate you, it is all the same to you; but when you have great love for him, then you earnestly desire to possess his heart in return. This, then, is clear proof that God greatly loves his people, since, whenever their hearts wander from him, he is greatly grieved, and he rebukes them, and earnestly pleads with them setting the coldness of their hearts in a true light, and striving to bring them back to warm affection towards himself. Not only are God's rebukes proofs of his love, but when he goes farther, and deals out blows as well as words, there is love in every stroke of his hand. Most truly does he say, “As many as I love I rebuke and chasten,” since rebukes and chastenings are proofs that he will not lose our hearts without a struggle for them. Do not look, therefore, upon a sermon that rebukes as something to be avoided. Far from it. Hear it and accept it as a token of love from God to your souls. That man is very foolish who will not bear the warning of a friend. Few prize a friend's rebukes, and yet a wise man knows that there is no greater token of the affection of a friend than when he will undertake the unpleasant duty of pointing out our faults. Many parents are like Eli: they cannot endure the task of chastening their children; and so, when their sons grow up to be their plague, they must not wonder, for they have procured this evil to themselves by their unworthy love of ease. Our heavenly Father is never an Eli: he will not “spare the rod and spoil the child.” He loves us too well to suffer us to go on in our iniquity. He will not stay his hand, and leave us to perish. He will scourge rather than abandon; he will chide rather than lose. To-day he speaks in tones of severity that he may not be compelled to utter to-morrow words of doom. Accept, then, at this time, dear friend, whatever shall come to you out of this text. If it should be bitter in your mouth,

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yet receive it thankfully from God as good medicine to your spirit, and so may his Spirit cause it to be.

Coming to the text in which God proves his love to his people because he will not let their love readily go away from himself, notice, first, a *grievous sin*. "My people have forgotten me." Secondly, a *chiding question about that sin*. "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" And then, thirdly, let us observe *the call to repentance* which lies within the text, like perfume in a flower. If we have forgotten God, let us grieve over such forgetfulness, and turn to him at once with full purpose of heart—even unto God our exceeding joy.

I. First, then, here is A VERY GRIEVOUS SIN. "My people have forgotten me days without number."

Observe whom they had forgotten: it will help us to see the sin of it. The Lord saith, "My people have forgotten me." It would not have mattered half as much if they had forgotten their dearest friends—if the husband had forgotten his wife, or the mother her child; but here are favoured men and women who have forgotten their God, their Father, their life, their all. "My people have forgotten me, *their God*." Other nations, having set up their false gods, did not forget them, but, with blind pertinacity of devotion, they bowed before them; but my people have forgotten their God, the only God, the living and true God. My people have forgotten *me*—the good God, *whom it is pleasure to remember*. "Thou art good, and doest good," said the Psalmist, and it is true; yet too often we forget the source of all goodness. If we could forget the evil, it were well; but to forget the only and essential good is sad indeed. "My people have forgotten me," *whom they were bound in duty to remember*. God is our Creator: shall we not remember him that made us? God is our preserver. Shall we not remember him in whom "we live, and move, and have our being"? God is our Father; and shall children forget the Father at whose table they feed, and from whose lips they are comforted! God is our all in all; and shall we yet forget him? Surely, it were better to lose memory than for memory to lose its hold upon God.

My people have forgotten *me*! God, the good, the best, who has a chief right to be remembered. Brethren, there is great evil in our hearts, or it would be so hard to forget God as to be impossible. A friend has gone away from us, and we do not see him; but he has left so many tokens of his goodness that we are reminded of him every day. Is it not so with God? Has he not left us innumerable tokens of his affection for us? Ought we to forget when so many forget-me-nots are round about us? But, supposing that friend has not gone away at all, but is living with us in the house, and enters even into our chamber, what shall we say if we forget one who is constantly with us? No man is so present with his friend as God is with his people. He is in us and round about us. Never can we depart from him, for we are not only in him, but he is in us, and he sees all our ways. Oh, strange sin that we should forget One who is everywhere present, and manifests that presence in deeds of love.

O forgetful creature, bethink thee of thy Lord. What! dost thou owe the breath in thy nostrils to God, and yet canst thou forget? Is the bread upon thy table put there by the hand of a God whom thou dost

not remember? Are the very clothes upon thy back the gift of his divine charity, and dost thou forget him! Wouldest thou be in the grave—nay, wouldest thou be in hell—but for his mercy, and yet is he not in all thy thoughts? Oh, this wicked forgetfulness of ours! Go to; let us forget all else beside, but let it not be charged upon us that we have forgotten our God. Yet so it is written, “My people have forgotten me.”

Who were they that forgot God? That casts a second light upon this sin. “My people have forgotten me.” Not strangers, not heathen, not those who have only heard of me but have never known me; but “my people.” It signifies, “my chosen, my elect, a people whom I have taken out from the midst of the earth that they may be a people unto me for ever. My people have forgotten me.” Chosen of God, and yet forget electing love? “My people.” It is a *redeemed* people who have become the Lord’s, because they are not their own, but are bought with a price. He has redeemed them unto himself for ever—redeemed them from among men by the matchless price of his only begotten Son’s life. And shall it be that those on whom there is the eternal blood-mark—who are set apart by sacrifice to be God’s own—that they shall forget him? Oh, sad ingratitude! “My people.” That is to say, a people not only chosen and redeemed, but *brought to know him*, brought into fellowship with him, brought into relationship with him, brought absolutely into union with him,—they have forgotten me. You that sat at Jesus’s feet, and drank in his loving words; you that sat at his table, and to whom he was made known in the breaking of bread; you that have laid your head upon the bosom of the Lord—can it, shall it be said of you, “My people have forgotten me”? Oh, but this is sad, “He that eateth bread with me hath forgotten me. He that said he would die for my sake has forgotten me. He that sang just now,

‘Hast thou a lamb in all thy flock
I would disdain to feed?
Hast thou a foe before whose face
I fear thy cause to plead?’

he has forgotten me!” Alas, my brethren, that ever you and I should have been upon the mount with Jesus, that we should have been in the garden with him, that we should have danced for very joy of heart in his presence, and should have felt ourselves next door to the gates of heaven when he has laid bare his heart to us, and yet it should ever be said of us that we have forgotten him! This will be sad indeed, if ever it comes to this; and yet this is the crime that is laid at the door of his own people. “My people have forgotten me.”

Observe sadly *the space in which they had forgotten*: in the case of Israel, it is added, “days without number.” Ah me! I hope it has not come to that with any of us here present; and yet it may; it may. I may be touching a chord now which shall awaken the saddest memories. “Days without number.” How long is it, friend, since you were in the habit of walking with God? How long is it since you have seen the face of the Well-Beloved? I ventured to put that question once to a professor, and, shaking his head, he replied, “Don’t ask me *that*: if you

will ask me whether I have been a drunkard, whether I have been dishonest in business, whether I have done any positive action by which I have degraded the Christian name, I can answer you without fear; but if you ask, How long since I have had fellowship with Christ, I cannot—I dare not—answer you." Yet I venture to press the question, and hope the answer will not be, "I have forgotten him days without number." I hope you will not sing, as Cowper did—

"What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd!
How sweet their memory still!
But now I find an aching void
The world can never fill."

On the contrary, may it be yours and mine to be kept from forgetting God at all; and if there ever should be a moment in which we wander, may it be a small moment, much lamented and never repeated. May our soul soon come back as the needle of the compass returns to its pole. Turn it awhile with your finger, and you may move it east, west, south, but take your finger away, and back it comes to its pole. So may it be with us! May we be like the birds of the air, which at evening seek their nests. As the stone may be thrown aloft by force, but naturally returns to the earth again, so may we, if tossed about by Satan, fall back upon our firm resting-place in Jesus. May our forgettings be for a small moment, but in life and death may we remember our Well-beloved.

You see the sin lies in this, that we should forget God, that we should do it, and do it "*days without number.*"

How is God forgotten? What are the manifestations of this offence? Some professors evidently forget God by their *worldliness*. When they were in a humbler condition of society they were wont to find great enjoyment at prayer-meetings,—the assembling of the saints together was very joyful to them. The reading and hearing of the word were gracious refreshments to them, but they are now too rich to care for this light bread. They have prospered so much that if they prosper much more it will be a thousand times worse than adversity, as in the case of the celebrated captain who, when his soldiers said they had won a victory, said, "One more such victory as this, and we shall be defeated for ever." Such rising men, like the Israelites, have been filled with the quails, but while the meat is yet in their mouths the wrath of God has come upon them. They have been fattened with the treasures of the world, but their souls have been starved to very skeletons, for they have not fed upon the things of God. Some that were high professors now seem to have no religion whatever; they mix up with worldly people, and seem quite happy with them. I have seen the hand of God go out against such followers of Demas. They prospered, and as they prospered they became less and less attentive to divine things, and turned aside from the truth of God, and their children have grown up to be utter worldlings—some of their sons to be debauched and depraved; till the name that stood high in the church of God is struck out of the roll of Israel, and their family is rather numbered amongst the sons of Belial than amongst the saints of the Most High. Such have forgotten God, "*days without number.*" O my beloved comrades in the army of Christ, may you all be preserved from such a curse.

Some have forgotten God by *self-seeking*. They live unto themselves. It is clear that, though once they seemed to have a zeal for God, now their zeal is entirely to push their own way, to make their own fortunes, to plant out their children—anything and everything except the glory of God and the love of souls. And yet they profess to be God's people even now. True is the lament, "My people have forgotten me." It is well to forget self to glorify God; but to make self our god is a thing accursed in the highest degree.

Some, too, show that they forget God by *the failure of their trust*. They are in trouble, and they are very anxious. Why? Because they have forgotten God, though he has promised to help them. They are wondering what is to become of them, looking all about them with the greatest amount of carking care that even a worldling might feel; and if you say to them, "God will provide, God is your helper," they have forgotten God, they have left him out of their calculation. They are fretting and worrying, they are troubled and cast down, because they have forgotten God. You can do this in your daily concerns, until you may act as if God himself were dead. It is sad indeed when a Christian acts upon atheistic principles, and despairs as if he had no God to succour him. Some people when things run a little cross to them, some working-men when they are out of work, some men when they cannot see God's work prospering just as they would have it, leave out of their calculation the one great worker, the one great force, and soon get troubled, and cast down, and go crawling about the world full of distrust. Ah me, what evils come to men when they have forgotten God!

Alas, there are some who add to this a forgetfulness of God through *neglect of private devotion*. Prayers are slurred over; drawing near to God becomes a form and a pretence. The word is read, but it is not read with the view of finding God in the sacred volume, and having fellowship with him through the word. Oh, it is sad when it can be said that God's people are forgetting him in the closet. "It was such a busy day," says one, "I could not find time to pray." Recollect how Martin Luther acted: he said that he must have three hours' prayer one day because it was such a busy day that he should not have strength to get through it if he did not have extra time for devotion. It is foolish to say, "I have more to do, and so I will take less time in getting strength to do it with." As well might the mower say, "It is a bigger field to mow, and so I will take less trouble in sharpening my scythe." It is, depend upon it, a dead waste of time to be short in drawing near to God. The Lord might well complain:—"My people have forgotten me. They have not waited upon me in wrestling prayer: they have not cried to me during the day. They have not lifted up their hearts to me in the moment of trouble; they have not consulted me in difficulty; they have not rejoiced in me in the time of their joy. They have forgotten me."

And you and I can do it in a very high sense by a *breach of communion*, by getting out of fellowship with God, by walking contrary to him, so that he walks contrary to us. It is very bad walking and very bad living when God and ourselves are at cross purposes. It is a very sweet thing, when you are conscious of having done wrong, to go back

to your heavenly Father at once and own it, and get right again. How willing he is to receive us! How glad he is to blot out the past and let bygones be bygones, and to let us start anew with him. He delights to forgive. Sometimes we let the stones accumulate till there is quite a heap, and they are made into a wall, which blocks our way. If every stone had been flung away one by one, how much easier it would have been! There would not be clouds of dust if we kept our ways well watered with daily repentance. There would not be a separation between God and our soul in great things if we would not allow it in little things. But, I fear me, too often it may be said of this high point of rapturous fellowship with God, "My people have forgotten me days without number."

I scarcely need, I think, to talk longer about this sin, except to notice that, *if ever we do forget God, it leads to all sorts of mischief.* We lose our joy and our comfort; and then we lose our strength and our watchfulness; and then we backslide by little and little; and then, probably, we fall into one sin, and then into another sin, if not into a third more grievous still. David had never sinned with Bathsheba if he had not forgotten his God. By degrees we get hardened about our state, and soon it comes to this—that we have lost the presence of God, and do not care whether we have it or not. Oh, this is a sad, sad state of heart. God save us from it. May it never be said of us, "My people have forgotten me days without number."

II. And now, dear friends, I call your attention to THE CHIDING QUESTION which is the very marrow of the text—"Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?"

And I suppose that question is put, first, because *there are many trivial things which occupy minds so that they cannot forget them.* How sad it is that the grandest things, the best things, should not equally engross our thoughts! Now, I will not say a word about you western women that are here: of course, you do not care about ornaments or dress; at least, you should not; but eastern women were very fond of ornaments, and it was a question which every Oriental could understand, "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" Of course such forgetfulness was impossible. The young woman's mind was full of her jewels. Isaiah gives you a long list that seems to have been cut out of the fashion-book of the day, a long list of various things that ladies used to wear in those days; and these they never forgot. Their minds doted upon them, and when the marriage-day came round, that was the main thought—how they should be dressed, how they should glitter before all onlookers. Forget her ornaments? The question is absurd. The maid's mind was taken up with them. A bride forget her attire? It could not be. And yet I venture to say that these things are trifles,—that the costliest jewels in the world are nothing but mere stones,—that the richest dress that ever was made is excelled by birds and flies, and that the flowers of the field far surpass anything that can be manufactured by the needle. When the attire is all fitted on, and the ornaments are all in their places, the whole matter is a trifle. We should have had no need of either ornament or attire if it had not been for sin. Strange that the insignia of our fall should become the ground of our boasting. Yet so it is. But here is the

point: do, then, these eastern women value their jewels and their dress so much that they cannot forget them? Are their heads filled with these things so that they never slip out of their memories? And do the people of God forget their God? I do not know a stronger way of putting it. Can these trifles secure their places so surely, and shall the supremest good so readily escape our thoughts? Shame on us! Every time we see one who, in dressing has evidently paid the daintiest attention to every pin we ought to stand rebuked. When we see a woman curling, plaiting or bedecking the hair, or putting on jewels, let us think to ourselves, "Does she pay so much attention to such a thing as that, and do I think so little of my God? Have I such slender care to be dressed in the rich things that the divine Bridegroom has provided for me? Do I take so little notice of the treasures of his grace?" That is the first word of rebuke. It is a very powerful one to those who think it over. Shall trifles be remembered and God be forgotten?

The next is this: *if a bride did forget her attire, or a maid did forget her ornaments, it would be very unreasonable behaviour.* The thing was so unreasonable, that it was quite unknown. Suppose we found an eastern woman having no regard whatever, on her marriage day, to her attire; she would be thought to be mad. They would say, "This is so contrary to all women's ways in this part of the country, that she must have lost her reason." It is unreasonable that a bride should forget her ornaments and her attire; but how infinitely more unreasonable it is that you and I should forget God. He is our diadem of glory: he is our beauty of holiness. In Christ we are arrayed in raiment of needlework, and our garments are of wrought gold. Can we, shall we forget him? There may be a reason for forgetting to eat bread; there may be a reason for forgetting to put on one's garments; such neglects have been reasonable in times of fire, or danger to life, but there never can be a reason for forgetting God. A child of God is in the most unreasonable condition in which a human being can be when he is living a single day without remembering his God, his life, his heaven, his all.

Next, *it would have been a most unseasonable thing for a maid to forget her attire at her wedding.* If she forgot her dress on other days, it might be well enough; but, when the marriage drew near, for the bride to forget her attire would be thought a most unseasonable neglect. Forget it to-morrow, if you will, but not when your marriage has come. You may have forgotten it many days ago; but do not forget it now that the happy day has arrived. A bride who forgets her attire would be something like the foolish virgins who forgot to take oil in their vessels with their lamps. And, certainly, it is a most unseasonable thing for me and you to forget our God while we are here. Let the soldier, when the arrow is flying from every bush, forget his armour, but let us not forget our God. Let the hungry man, when famine rages through the land, forget his store of bread, but let us not forget the food of our souls, which is our Lord Jesus. Now, when dangers assail you, temptations surround you, corruptions rage within you, and Satan molests you, forget not now your God. And I will warrant you, if you do not forget God on earth you never will in heaven, for there we shall be all taken up with him, and never for a moment shall

our thoughts wander from our God, our heaven, our all. However, now, at any rate, it would be unseasonable in the highest degree to forget your God.

Notice the conduct of the maid or the conduct of the bride, with regard to her ornaments. What does the maid do? Her conduct is the reverse of forgetfulness as to dress and ornaments. She *labours hard to obtain* her ornaments and to gain her attire. Many women in the East save up every coin that they have, and turn all into silver. They do not care about storing up coin, but they prefer the precious metal in the form of rings for their ankles, arms, necks, noses, and ears. It is their life's work to provide themselves with ornaments against the marriage day. While they do this, let us do better: let us store up the thoughts of Christ, and the words of Christ, and the things of Christ, and let us labour, let us wear ourselves away, to get more and more of Christ, that we may be adorned with him and made comely in his comeliness.

When the eastern woman has with great difficulty obtained her ornaments and her attire, then *she thinks a great deal of them*: she preserves them with much care; she will, if possible, prevent a thief from taking away a ring or gem; she locks them up carefully. Oh, that we did store up every bit we get of our Lord's love, and put it by to keep it, never losing any pearl that we find, or any ring that we fashion by experience. I say that the eastern woman thinks about her bridal attire. Why, we hear of them dreaming about it—dreaming about the next bracelet they will buy, the next jewel they will hang about their necks. Would to God we were as much taken up with the preciousness of Christ! I sometimes dream of Christ, and when I do I am glad, for this is proof that my thoughts have been with him when I was awake, or they would not have been with him when I was asleep. Oh, to have our whole soul occupied with thoughts of Christ and things divine.

How joyfully the eastern woman *puts on her jewels*, puts on her attire. She has these things to wear them. I am ashamed of those Christians who are ashamed of Christ. They have jewels: I hope they have; but they are very chary of ever showing them. Perhaps they get some Christian friend into a corner, and they say, "I have a jewel that I mean to wear, but not yet; I am afraid it should be seen as yet, but I will show it you if you will not tell anybody else." If anybody comes round after sermon and gently enquires, "Have you any of the precious things of Christ?" these timid ones blush and half deny their own joy. Some people—ay, some of Christ's well-beloved ones—whisper, "I hardly know." Is this after the right manner? The eastern woman puts everything upon her on her marriage; and eastern ladies at a banquet are all ablaze with diamonds and jewels, and gold and silver. I wish you Christian people would publicly put on your priceless jewels and never be ashamed of them. Do you know anything about Christ? Tell it: tell it; and you will soon know more. Do you know anything about Christ? Live it; live it out; and you will soon have more. Do put on your jewels. I do not see, while the Bridegroom is about, why you should put on your everyday rags. I have seen young folks smarten themselves up when their beloved has come to see them; and, oh! since our Beloved is always coming to see us we ought to keep ourselves in good trim, well decked in the graces of his Spirit;

for "Shall a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" In the presence of Christ let us glory in him; let us delight ourselves in him. Let us tell the world we never can have enough of Jesus, our Lord; and when they ask, "What is your Beloved more than any other beloved?" let us show how he has enriched us and blessed us with his love and grace; and let this be our happy answer to an unbelieving generation.

III. Now I close with a few words of CALL TO REPENTANCE, if we have in any measure or degree forgotten our God. I am sure, first, that our God does not deserve to be treated so. "You use no other friend so ill." Such love, such love, such wondrous love, infinite, unending, everlasting love, to you! And can you forget? Can you forget? So undeserving, and yet so favoured! Can you forget your friend? Loved by God as he loves his own soul! Can you forget?

Have you forgotten? Will not the time past suffice for that? A half a minute's forgetfulness of God is half a minute too long. Let it not come to be "days without number." But, if the number be ever so small, let us weep to think we should have forgotten him at all. Let our sorrows flow at the recollection that he has never forgotten us—no, never for a moment, and yet we have forgotten him. Our names have been on Jesus's breastplate, and on his shoulders days without number; shall his name be ever out of our minds? "I have graven thee on the palms of my hands," says he. Let us engrave his name upon the tablets of our hearts.

Think, for a minute, if he had forgotten you—forgotten you in your merriest moment, ay, in your holiest moment, what would have been your portion? If God had suspended the outflow of his grace, and left you to yourselves, what had been your fate! Oh, my God, my God, if thou hadst once forgotten me, where had I been? But he never has forgotten us. He is not forgetting us at this moment. He says to each one, however wandering, "I do earnestly remember thee still." He will never forget us. The dying thief said, "Lord, remember me"; and Jesus did remember him. He cries, "I remember thee, the love of thine espousals." Lord, dost thou remember me? Then would I smite my heart to think I ever should have forgotten thee.

Oh, how can we forget when God is our diadem of glory? It is our highest privilege that he is ours and we are his. God is our beauty, the honour and excellence of all his saints. It is this that makes us illustrious in the eyes of cherubim and seraphim—that God is ours and we are his. God is our joy, our only joy, our overflowing joy. He that knoweth God hath heaven within his spirit even now. Come, let us not forget again, but let us bind the glorious name of Lord about our heart. May the sweet Spirit do it now, for Jesus Christ's sweet love's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah ii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 640, 639.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LOVED AND LOVING.

A Short Sermon,

AMONG THE GOLDEN APPLE TREES, BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”—*Song of Solomon* ii. 16.

“MY BELOVED,”—this is a sweet name which our love takes liberty to apply to the Lord Jesus. His inexpressible beauty has won our affection, and we cannot help loving him whatever may come of it: whether he be ours or not, and whether he smiles upon us or frowns, we love him and cannot do otherwise. We are carried away by the torrent of his goodness, and have no longer the control of our affections. As long as we live we must and will love the altogether lovely One. Yes, he is, and must be to me, “My Beloved.”

BUT SUPPOSE,—suppose for a moment that we loved and had no right to love. Many a heart that has cried “*My beloved*,” has been wounded even unto death, because it could not come at its choice, but was doomed never to exclaim, “My beloved is mine.” The beloved was longed for, but could not be grasped. This is often so in earthly love, since such love may be unlawful, or unwise, and in every case it is the source of grievous misery. Thank God, this is not the case with the soul enamoured of Christ Jesus; for he freely presents himself in the gospel as the object of our confidence and love. Though he be infinitely above us, yet he delights to be one with all his loving ones, and of his own will he gives himself to us. A polluted sinner may love the perfect Saviour, for there is no word in Scripture to forbid. Ay, if a sinner would be wedded to the Lord of glory there is none to forbid the banns.

Suppose that our possession of Jesus were a matter of doubt, as, alas! it is with far too many: that would be a door of sorrow indeed. Life would be unhappy if it were soured by a question as to whether our Well-beloved is ours or no. To an awakened and instructed mind it is anguish to be dubious of our hold of Christ; about this we must needs be sure, or be unhappy. All else may be in jeopardy, but, O most blessed Lord, never allow our possession of thyself to be in dispute! It would be a poor thing to say, “My beloved may be mine,” or even “he was mine,” or “perhaps he is mine”: we cannot bear any verb but one in the indicative mood, present tense,—“My beloved *is* mine.”

Suppose yet once again that, though we loved, and rightly loved, and

actually possessed the beloved object, yet our affection was not returned. Ah, misery! to love and not be loved! Blessed be God, we can not only sing, "My Beloved is mine," but also, "I am his." He values me, he delights in me, he loves me! It is very wonderful that Jesus should think us worth the having; but since he does so, we find a matchless solace in the fact. Which is the greater miracle—that he should be mine, or that I should be his? Certainly, the second is the surer ground of safety, for I cannot keep my treasures, since I am feebleness itself; but Jesus is able to preserve his own, and none can pluck them out of his hand. The truth that Jesus calls me his is enough to make a man dance and sing all the way between here and heaven. Realize the fact that we are dear to the heart of our incarnate God, and amid the sands of this wilderness a fountain of overflowing joy is open before us.

BUT THE TEXT IS FREE FROM ALL SUPPOSITION: it is the language of indisputable possession, the exclamation of a confidence which has made its assurance doubly sure. There are two positive verbs in the present tense, and not the smell of a doubt has passed upon them. Here is a brave positiveness which fears no controversy, "my beloved is mine and I am his," doubt it who may; nay, if you must needs doubt it, ask himself. There he is, for "he feedeth among the lilies." The spouse sees him of whom she speaks; he may be a mere myth to others but he is a substantial, lovable, lovely, and actually beloved person to her. He stands before her, and she perceives his character so clearly that she has a comparison ready for him, and likens him to a gazelle feeding on the tender grass among the lilies. This is a very delightful state of heart. Some of us know what it is to enjoy it from year to year. Christ is ours, and we know it. Jesus is present, and by faith we see him. Our marriage union with husband or wife cannot be more clear, more sure, more matter of fact, than our oneness with Christ and our enjoyment of that oneness. Joy! joy! joy! He whom we love is ours! We can also see the other side of the golden shield, for he whom we prize beyond all the world also prizes us, and we are his. Nothing in the universe besides deserves for an instant to be compared in value with this inestimable blessing. We would not change with the cherubim: their chief places in the choirs of heaven are poor as compared with the glory which excelleth,—the glory of knowing that I my best Beloved's am and he is mine. A place in Christ's heart is more sweet, more honourable, more dear to us than a throne among the angels. Not even the delights of Paradise can produce a rival to this ecstatic joy—"My Beloved is mine, and I am his."

YET HAS THE TEXT A NOTE OF CAUTION. The condition of fully assured love is as tender as it is delightful. The spouse in the seventh verse had charged her companions by all things of gentleness, delicacy, and timidity—"by the roes, and by the hinds of the field"—to refrain from offending her beloved while he deigned to abide with her; she had also compared him to a roe or a young hart, rather hiding than revealing himself; and here she likens him to the same roe, quietly pasturing in the gardens, so gently moving that he does not break or even bruise a lily, but softly insinuates himself among their delicate beauties, as one of the same dainty mould. This hints in poetic imagery

at the solemn and sacred truth that the dearest fellowship with Jesus can never be known by the rough and the coarse, the hard and the restless, but remains the priceless heritage of the lowly and meek; and then can only retain it by a studious care which cherishes love, and guards it from even the least intrusion. A gazelle among the lilies would start at the bark of a fox, and be gone at the voice of a stranger; and therefore soft whispers of inward love must say, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes," and nimble hands with noiseless fingers must draw up the lattice that kindly eyes may look forth at the windows, and may be seen of him who delights in love.

The evident intent of the language is to set forth the delicacy of the highest form of holy fellowship. The Lord our God is a jealous God, and that jealousy is most seen where most his love is displayed. The least sin, wilfully indulged in, will grieve the Holy Spirit; slights, forgetfulnesses, and neglects will cause him to turn away. If we would remain positively and joyously assured that the Beloved is ours and that we are his we must use the utmost circumspection and holy vigilance. No man gains full assurance by accident, or retains it by chance. As the gentle hind wanders in lovely spots where grow the pure white lilies, and as he shuns the places profaned by strife, and foul with rank weeds and nettles, so does the Lord Jesus come to holy minds perfumed with devotion and consecrated to the Lord, and there in sacred quiet he finds solace and abides with his saints.

May the Lord preserve us from pride, from self-seeking, from carnality, and wrath, for these things will chase away our delights even as dogs drive off the hind of the morning. Both our inward and outward walk must be eagerly watched, lest anything should vex the Bridgroom. A word, a glance, a thought may break the spell, and end the happy rest of the heart, and long may it be ere the blessing be regained. We have some of us learned by bitter experience that it is hard to establish a settled peace, and easy enough to destroy it. The costly vase, the product of a thousand laborious processes, may be broken in a moment; and so the supreme delight of communion with the Lord Jesus, the flower of ten thousand eminent delights, may be shattered by a few moments' negligence. Hence the one lesson of our little sermon is—"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please."

"For I am jealous of my heart
Lest it should once from him depart;
Then should I lose my best delight
Should my Beloved take to flight."

Mentone, Dec. 10th, 1881.

BELOVED FRIENDS,—In a few days I hope to turn my face homeward, much refreshed by laying aside the harness for a season. I beseech you continue your prayers for me—prayer which I value beyond all earthly treasures. If these sermons profit you, ask that I may have grace to continue them. Entering upon a Twenty-seventh Volume, I entreat your help to increase their circulation, that they may have a wider range of influence.

Yours heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ONLY TRUST HIM! ONLY TRUST HIM!

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 26TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed."—Luke xvii. 12—14.

SEVERAL interesting topics might fairly be found in these verses. We see here the abounding fruit of sin, for here were ten lepers in a group, and the abundance of divine power to meet it, for they were all cleansed. So also we see how Christ must come first, and ceremonies second: first the work of grace, and then the outward showing of it. The Lord's tenderness towards outcasts, his attention to prayers from a distance, and his regard for the ceremonial law so long as it was in force, might each one yield an instructive meditation. I have, however, only one thought which I wish to bring under your notice, and to press upon you, perhaps almost to repetition and monotony. That thought I would engrave as with an iron pen upon the hearts and minds of all here present who desire to find eternal salvation. May the Holy Ghost imprint it upon every living soul.

These ten lepers were required by the Saviour to perform an act of faith in him before they had the slightest evidence in themselves that he had wrought a good work upon them. Before they began to feel their foul blood cleansed, before the horrible dryness of leprosy had yielded to healthy perspiration, they were to go towards the house in which the priest lived to be examined by him and to be pronounced clean. They were to exhibit faith in Christ Jesus's power to heal them by going to exhibit themselves as healed, though as yet they were in the same condition as before. They were to start to the place where they should be examined by the priest, believing that Jesus had healed them, or would heal them, though, as yet, they had no internal evidence whatever that their flesh should become as that of a little child. This is the point I wish to dwell upon—that the Lord Jesus Christ bids sinners believe in him, and trust their souls to him, though they may not yet discern in themselves any work of his grace. Just as these men were lepers, and nothing but lepers, so you may be sinners, and nothing but

sinner, and yet you are bidden to exhibit faith in Jesus Christ while you are just what you are. As these men were to start straight away to the priest with all their leprosy white upon them, and to go there as if they felt they were already healed, so are you, with all your sinfulness upon you, and your sense of condemnation heavy on your soul, to believe in Jesus Christ just as you are, and you shall find everlasting life upon the spot. This is my point, and it is of the first importance. Sinners, as sinners, are to believe in Jesus for everlasting life. The voice to each one of them is, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

Now, first, I shall notice *what signs are commonly looked for by unconverted men as reasons for believing in Christ*; which, indeed, are no reasons at all: then, secondly, I shall try to show *what is the real ground and reason for faith in Christ*; and, thirdly, *what will be the issue of a faith in Christ similar to that of the lepers*.

I. First, then, I say that we are to believe in Jesus Christ—to trust him to heal us of the great disease of sin—though as yet we may have about us no sign or token that he has wrought any good work upon us. We are not to look for signs and evidences within ourselves before we venture our souls upon Jesus. The contrary supposition is a soul-destroying error, and I will try to expose it by showing **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THAT ARE COMMONLY LOOKED FOR BY MEN.**

One of the most frequent is *a consciousness of great sin*, and a horrible dread of divine wrath, leading to despair. Strange to say, we constantly meet with persons who say, "I could believe in Jesus Christ if I felt more burdened by a sense of sin. I could trust him if I were driven more entirely to despondency and to despair; but I am not depressed enough; I am not broken-hearted enough; I am sure I am not brought low enough, and therefore I cannot trust Christ." Strange notion, that if the night were darker we should see the better! Strange idea, that if we were nearer death we should have better hope of life! Now, my friend, you are speaking and acting in distinct disobedience to Christ; for he would have you trust himself, not on the ground of your feeling much or little, or on the ground of your feeling anything at all, but simply because you are sick and he has come to heal you, and is abundantly able to work your cure. If you say, "Lord, I cannot trust thee unless I feel this or that," then you, in effect, say, "I can trust my own feelings, but I cannot trust God's appointed Saviour." What is this but to make a god out of your feelings, and a saviour out of your inward griefs? Is your own heart to save you by its dark insinuations against divine love? Is unbelief, after all, to bring you salvation because you refuse to believe your God? And despair—wicked despair, which gives the lie to God—is that to be trusted in, and not the Saviour whom God has sent into the world to save sinners? Is there, then, a new gospel, and does it run, "He that denies the power of Jesus and despairs of his love shall be saved"?

You know that Jesus justifies the ungodly, and cleanses the wicked from their sin through his precious blood; and though you know this to be true, you say, "I cannot trust the Crucified, I cannot rely upon his full atonement unless I feel my guilt to be unpardonable, and disbelieve my God." I pray that you may never feel as you foolishly

think you ought to feel; for feelings of despair dishonour the Lord and vex his Spirit, and certainly cannot be good for you. It comes to this—that you are making a god of your despair, and a Christ out of your horrors, and so you are setting up an antichrist in the place where Christ alone should be. Come, young friend, though you have not been terrified and alarmed and heart-broken to the extent of some, will you trust Christ with your soul, and ask no questions? I pray you, trust Jesus once for all.

“Cast thy guilty soul on him,
Find him mighty to redeem;
At his feet thy burden lay;
Look thy doubts and cares away;
Now by faith the Son embrace;
Plead his promise, trust his grace.”

That is the point. Can you trust Jesus? for that is what he bids you do. How strange it seems that anyone should raise a question about trusting HIM! How insane and insulting to be willing to trust our feelings and not trust the Saviour! These ten lepers felt no change whatever wrought upon them when Jesus bade them go off to be examined by the priest; yet away they went, and as they went they were made whole. Trust Jesus Christ just as you are, without those feelings which you have hitherto supposed to be necessary as a sort of preparation. Trust him at once, and follow him, and he will make you whole before you have taken many steps in the path of faith and obedience. O Lord God, lead all my hearers and readers to trust thy Son at once.

Many other persons think that they must, before they can trust Christ, experience *quite a blaze of joy*. “Oh,” says one, “I heard a Christian say that when he found the Saviour he was so happy that he did not know how to contain himself, and he sang like a whole band of music in one—

‘Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.’

Oh that I could be as full of joy as these ‘happy day’ people!” Just so. But what mischief will you make out of that? Are you going to find evil even in our delights? Will you feed your unbelief on the joy of the Lord? What strange perversity! “Why,” you say, “must I not be happy before I can believe in Christ?” What? What? Must you needs have the joy before you exercise the faith? How unreasonable! Because we tell you that such and such a root produces a sweet fruit, will you say that you must have the fruit before you will accept the root? Surely that is bad reasoning. We who have experienced this joy came to Christ in order to obtain it, and did not wait until we found it, or else we should have waited until now. We came to Jesus just as we were: some of us were very wretched, but we came just as we then were, and we trusted Christ, and we were made whole. Then followed joy and peace; but if we had waited till we felt joy and peace before we came, we should have been standing out against the gospel plan, which is, that men are to trust the Saviour before they feel the slightest benefit from him. O sinner, is not this common sense? Must

we not take medicine before we are cured by it? must we not eat bread before it removes our hunger? Must we not open our eyes before we see? Before the Lord Jesus has either comforted you or healed you consciously, you are to come and just do what he bids you, and trust in him to save you. Neither the gloom of horror nor the bliss of delight is to be looked for before faith, but faith is to precede all, and that faith is a simple, humble reliance upon Christ.

We have known others who have expected to have a text impressed upon their minds. A kind of superstition has grown up that a special scripture must, somehow or other, hover over the mind, and continue there, so that you cannot get rid of it, and then you may hope that you are saved. In old families there are superstitions about white birds coming to a window before a death, and I regard with much the same distrust the more common superstition that if a text continues upon your mind day after day you may safely conclude that it is an assurance of your salvation. I hope I have never taught you to draw any such a conclusion. Far be it from me to assist you into a confidence which has so questionable a foundation. The Spirit of God often does apply Scripture with power to the soul; but this fact is never set forth as the rock for us to build upon. Will you find anything in the Bible to support the supposition that the vivid recollection of a text is a seal of conversion? It has often happened that some word of God does greatly comfort the soul; but why should you demand the same? Have you any right to say, "I will not believe God's word unless he impresses it upon me"? Is it a lie, then? "No, it is true," say you. Remember, if it is not true, an impression upon your mind would not make it true, and if it is true, why do you not believe it? If it is true, accept it. If there be any force about a promise, pray God to make you feel its force and power; but you ought to feel its force and power, and if you do not, sin lies at your door. As a reader of the Scriptures you must not fall into the idea that you are to wait till some Scripture burns its way into your soul; but you must read attentively, and believe what the Lord God says to you. Furthermore, I would have you remember, it is not reading the Scripture that saves you; it is believing in Christ. What did Christ himself say? He said to the Bible readers of his day, "Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; but ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Good as the searching of Scripture is, it is nothing without coming to Christ. You will only read your own condemnation in the Bible if you remain out of Christ. Even the Bible itself may be made into a stumbling-block if you substitute Bible-reading for closing in with Christ and putting your trust in him. Your immediate business is to trust Jesus, and no measure of reading will compensate for neglect of faith. What if no special text of Scripture were ever laid home to your heart at all, yet here it stands, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That is your business, my dear hearer, if you are to get peace at once; and I earnestly hope that some of you are going to get it before this sermon is over. I have asked your souls of my God, and I have got them for a prey to-night. They shall be David's spoil, and you shall be led in chains of grace to Jesus. Who among you will put his trust in Jesus? for, if you do so,

you shall surely find eternal salvation the moment you believe in his dear name.

There is another way in which some men try to get off believing in Christ, and that is, they *expect an actual conversion to be manifest in them before they will trust the Saviour*. Now, understand that Christ has wrought salvation in no man who is unconverted. There must be a perfect turning round of us—a complete conversion from sin to holiness. But that is salvation, and not a preparation for salvation. Conversion is the manifestation of Christ's healing power. But you are not to have this before you trust him; you are to trust him for this very thing. When a man with a disease goes to an eminent physician, does he say, "Doctor, I will trust you with my case when I have reached a certain stage"? "Nay," says the physician, "if you have reached that state you will be in a fair way of healing, and you won't want me." Your wisest plan is to go to your physician just as you are; and if you can be sure that he is an infallible healer, just put yourself into his hands as if you knew nothing, and he knew everything, and as if you would not have a will or way in it, but would leave yourself entirely with him. That is the thing to do with the Lord Jesus, the infallible Physician of the souls of men. Why, you poor wretched sinner, you say, "I am not a saint. I cannot be saved." Who said you were a saint? It is Christ's work to make you into a saint. "Oh, but I do not repent as I should." It is Christ's work to make you repent as you should, and to him you must come for repentance. "Oh, but my heart won't break." It is Christ who is to break your heart—not you who are to break it, and then come to him with it ready broken. Come to Jesus just as you are, with your hard, stony, senseless heart, and trust that and everything else to his saving power. "I do not seem even to have a strong desire," says one. Christ himself gives every spiritual desire by his Holy Spirit. He is a Saviour that begins the alphabet of mercy at A. He does not ask you to get as far as B, C, D, and promise then to meet you; but he begins at the beginning. The good Samaritan when he found the man beaten by the thieves came *where he was*. That is what Jesus does. He does not say, "Now, then, you wounded man, get up, and come to me, and I will pour the oil and wine into you." No; but he goes where the wounded one lies in utter helplessness, stoops over him, removes his rags, cleanses his wounds, pours in the oil and wine, and lifts him up, and bears him to the house of mercy. Poor soul! My Master is not a half Saviour, but a whole one; and if you are lying at the gates of death, hard by the doors of hell, he is as able to save you as if you were sitting on the doorstep of heaven. Just where you are, and as you are, trust Christ to save you, and you shall be saved. Do not look for conversion first, but expect it as the result of faith.

We have known some who have had a very curious idea, which I can hardly put into words, namely, that if they were to be saved they would *experience some very singular sensation*. They could believe in Christ if they felt in a mysterious fashion. It is rather difficult to understand people, but when I have been talking to some enquirers I have thought that they expected even a physical sensation—a sensation within their bodies. I remember one saying to me, "Sir, I was quite sure I was saved, for I felt so light." Poor simpleton, what does it matter whether

you felt light or heavy! What has that to do with it? Perhaps you were light-headed, or half out of your mind with absurd excitement. Beware of such nonsense. To feel light may be interpreted into being weighed in the balances and found wanting; it is a sensation which may frighten as much as console. "Oh," says one, "but I felt so singular." Yes, and many who are now in Bedlam could say the same. What does it matter what you felt? It is not feeling that will save you. Believing on Jesus will bring you the blessings of grace; but strange feelings may be produced by what you have eaten, or by the weather, or by hysteria, or a hundred other things. Do you not know that when politics are being discussed, or when some other subject is under dispute, an earnest orator will often stir men with excitement till their flesh creeps? But what of that? Excitement does not save anybody. Many are melted to tears by a novel or a play; but what is the benefit? You may be moved with religious excitement, and half the emotion may be purely physical, and there may be nothing of the grace of God in it. The wiser way is calmly to sit down and say, "Here is God's way of salvation—salvation through his crucified Son, Jesus Christ; and he has promised that if I trust his Son he will save me from sinning, and make a new man of me, and heal me of my spiritual diseases. I will trust him, for I am sure that the witness of God is true." By that simple and deliberate act of faith you are saved; the power to believe your God is the evidence that the cure has begun, and begun well. If you have, indeed, trusted him, Jesus has undertaken your case, and he will save you.

The very fact that you can and do believe has within it the essential force by which you will be delivered from the alienation of your mind. He that believes God is no longer an enemy to him. Those whom we trust we soon learn to love. This, you see, demands no singular sensation or excitement; this is plain and clear enough. "But must we not be born again?" says one. Yes, truly; and he that believes in Christ is born again. Though as yet he knows it not, the first mark of life is within his soul, for the first sure token of spiritual life is trusting Jesus Christ alone. The best evidence is not trusting marks, signs, evidences, inward feelings, impressions, and so on; but just getting out of that and trusting Jesus. There lies the essence of the saving change, the getting from self to the Lord God in Christ Jesus. A certain mariner has a fine anchor, one of the best constructed anchors ever used in the navy. He has it on board his ship, and yet it is not a pennyworth of use to him. While he has it on board his ship it does not answer the purpose of an anchor: his vessel drifts with the anchor on board. He drags it out upon the deck and looks at it. What an anchor! Would not that hold in the day of storm? He admires his anchor as if it were a mass of gold. The winds howl and the waves roar, but he feels safe with his anchor on board. Fool, this anchor is of no use to you while you can see it. A ship's anchorage cannot be in the ship itself. "Suppose I hang the anchor from the side of the vessel." It is of no use there. What must you do with it? Fling it overboard. Let it down into the deep, even to the sea-bottom. It is gone. You cannot see where it is. All right! That will do. Now, soul, fling your anchor of trust overboard. Do not let it hang to your feelings,

or to your impressions, or to anything that is in you; but overboard let it go, deep into the waters of infinite love, and let it get a grip on Jesus. Outside of you your hope must be; for as long as your confidence is within you, or has any dependence upon yourself, it is like an anchor on board, which can only increase the weight of the ship, but certainly cannot help it in the day of storm. There is the truth. God grant you grace to accept it.

II. And now, secondly, and as briefly as I can, I want to bring forward WHAT THE REASON IS FOR OUR BELIEVING IN JESUS CHRIST. What warrant have I, as a sinner, for trusting myself with Jesus Christ?

No warrant whatever within ourself need be looked for. The warrant for our believing Christ lies in this—first, there is *God's witness concerning his Son Jesus Christ*. God, the Everlasting Father, has set forth Christ "to be the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world." God the Father says to men, "I am able to forgive you justly through the death and righteousness of my Son. Trust me, and I will save you." What do you want more than that? He that believeth not hath made God a liar, because he hath not believed his witness concerning his Son. Why, surely, if God declares a thing, you do not need further evidence. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." What can be firmer than the voice of God, who cannot lie? Beloved hearers, I feel as if I really ought not to bring any other evidence before you. It looks so like insulting the Lord by trying to defend him, as if his perfect truth needed my testimony to support it. Angels never doubt God. Those bright and glorious beings never suspect their Maker. Worms of the dust! Worms of the dust, how can you doubt the God that made you? Oh, let it not be so. And when his testimony is that he is a God ready to pardon the guilty, waiting to forgive all those that trust his Son, why should we doubt such a gracious declaration? My soul, I charge thee trust thy Saviour, and raise no further question, but let the matter be assured and established within thee.

The next warrant for our believing is *Jesus Christ himself*. He bears witness on earth as well as the Father, and his witness is true. Consider who this Christ is whom we are bidden to trust. Look at his person. He is God, "very God of very God." Can we doubt him? He is perfect man, and he has taken perfect manhood upon himself for our sakes. Can we doubt him? He has lived a perfect life. When did he ever lie? Who can charge him with falsehood? He has died "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God"; and God has accepted the sacrifice of his dear Son. What surer proof of his truthfulness can he give us than his death for us? O trembler, why wilt thou refuse thy confidence to one so worthy of it? Canst thou doubt Calvary? Wilt thou despise the cross? Wilt thou say, "I want some other warrant for trusting Christ besides his own person and his finished work"? I feel ashamed almost to be pleading here for such a thing as this. Tell me wherein my Lord was ever false. O sons of men, tell me when once he refused to receive a sinner that came to him. You know that he is risen from the dead, and that he has gone into heaven, and sitteth now at the right hand of God, and will shortly come, and

dare you treat him as a mere pretender? Can you not trust in him? Can you dare distrust him? Do you want signs and wonders over and above those which are in himself? If one should rise from the dead you would not believe, if you do not believe Jesus, for you have more than Moses and the prophets, when you have Christ himself risen from the dead. Will you not trust him? I would like to get you by the hand, my brother, and put it personally to you,—Do you mean it, that you suspect my Saviour and cannot trust your soul with him? Do you mean it? Nay, with tears I do entreat you, do not treat him so badly, but cast your soul on him at this instant, and believe him just as you are, and he will save you. He will not run back from his word, but he will wash out your guilt in his own blood if you will consent to be cleansed.

Still, to put this in another shape, you want to know why you are to believe: your warrant for believing lies in the fact that *God commands you to believe*. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And this commandment we have received from our Master—that we preach this gospel unto every creature under heaven: and we do preach it in his name, commanding you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that ye believe in him. This divine command is warrant enough for you. If God commands you to do it, you need not say, "May I do it?" Nobody can want any permission to keep the law: the command includes a permit. When the law of the gospel comes from God himself, dear hearer, what is there to do but to obey it and believe at once? The door is open, enter. The feast is spread, eat. The fountain is filled, wash.

Moreover, there is *the promise* made to you and to every creature, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth in him is not condemned." Do you hear that? "He that believeth in him hath everlasting life." He has eternal life, he has it now. These are promises rich and free for you. What more do you want? Oh, I know not what more I can say,—when Jesus commands you, when Jesus invites you, how can you stand back? O blessed Spirit, make this plain to men and lead them to believe.

I will add only this one more thing: I dare say these poor lepers believed in Jesus because *they had heard of other lepers whom he had cleansed*. Now, here stands one before you, a representative of many more in this place, who, if this were a fit time, would stand up and say the same. I came to Jesus full of sin, guilty and lost, with a hard heart and a heavy spirit; and I looked to him, trusting him alone to save me; and he has saved me. He has changed my nature, he has blotted out my sin, and he has made me love him, and love all that is good and true and generous, for his sake. It is not I, even I, that am left alone to tell you; but, as I have said, there are thousands in this Tabernacle, at this very hour, upon whom the same miracle of divine mercy has been wrought. Therefore trust my Lord Jesus, and you shall feel the same miracle wrought upon you. Where are you, friend, you who want so much persuading for your own good? If I have money to give away I do not find that I have to persuade anybody to have it. *Jingle a guinea, and what ears men have! How soon they will rush*

where the coin gives forth its golden notes. Give bread away in a cold winter, or even a little soup, how the poor will crowd to get it! But when it is, "Trust Jesus, and your sin shall be forgiven you, and your nature shall be changed, and you shall be saved from sinning, and you shall be made pure and holy," oh, my Master, what are they at that they want calling so often? Men not only require calling, they need compelling to come in.

"Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,
To thee let sinners fly,
And take the bliss thy love imparts,
And drink, and never die."

III. I must now close with the third point, which shall not occupy you many minutes; it is this, **WHAT IS THE ISSUE OF THIS KIND OF FAITH THAT I HAVE BEEN PREACHING?** This doctrine of "only trust Jesus,"—what does it lead to? This trusting in Jesus without marks, signs, evidences, tokens, what is the result and outcome of it?

The first thing that I have to say about it is this,—that the very existence of such a faith as that in the soul is *evidence that there is already a saving change*. "Oh," say you, "I do not see that. How can it prove that I am a new man because I trust myself with Christ?" Consider a little: it will be an evidence of a saving change already wrought, for it will show that you have come to be obedient to Jesus, and obedient upon a matter which your proud will has long struggled against. Every man by nature kicks against simply trusting in Christ; and when at last he yields to the divine method of mercy it is a virtual surrender of his own will, the ending of rebellion, the establishment of peace. Faith is obedience. Faith is the evidence that the warfare has been ended by unconditional surrender. They said to Jesus in olden times, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" and he answered, "This is the work of God—the most godlike work that ye can do—that ye believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." It is even so: in one sense faith is not a work at all, and in another sense it is the grandest of all works. Here is where God and you are at issue, this is the central point of the quarrel: you want to be saved by something in yourself, but God says that he will save you if you trust in Christ. Now, if you do trust Christ just as you are, it will be an evidence that you have been made obedient to God, and so obedient that a complete, deep-seated, radical renewal of your nature has evidently taken place.

It will be an evidence, also, that you are humble; for it is pride that makes men want to do something, or to be something, in their own salvation, or to be saved in some wonderful way, that they may tell other people how wonderfully they were saved. When you are willing just to be saved like a poor, good-for-nothing sinner as you are, then you are already saved from pride. I will not compliment you: you are a good-for-nothing wretch of a sinner; and if you will trust Jesus, as a man must do who truly bears that character, it will prove that you are humble, and this will be good evidence that a change has passed over your spirit.

Again, faith in Jesus will be the best evidence that you are reconciled to God, for the worst evidence of your enmity to God is that you do not like God's way of salvation. You so much dislike God that you will not have heaven on God's terms. You, the sinner, are so much at war with God that you will go to hell rather than be saved in God's way. That is what it comes to. And when you give that up and say, "Lord, so long as I can be made whole—so long as I can be made to love thee—I am willing to be saved anyhow," there will be evidence of a great change in you. When you cry, "Lord, I will be saved in thine own way, and I will therefore trust Christ as thou hast bidden me," then God and you are reconciled upon a point of the chief importance. There is no battle between you now, for you are of one mind about trusting Christ. God has trusted his honour in Christ's hands, and you are trusting your soul in his hands, so that God and you are now agreed to honour Jesus. The moment you have trusted Christ, that simple thing becomes in itself a distinct admission and indisputable proof that a great change has been wrought in your relation to God, and in your feelings in reference to him.

Now, mark you, before long, sooner or later, *you will become delightfully conscious of the fact that you are saved.* Many a man is saved, and for a time he questions the truth of the gracious work, but in due time the blessing is made clear to him. When a man trusts Jesus as these ten lepers did, and acts upon his trust, good always comes of it. See the ten men! They are going towards the priest, though they have not yet felt that they are healed. They are acting upon Christ's authority, and he will not make fools of them, for they that trust in him shall not be ashamed nor confounded. They must start on their walk before they feel the healing; but as they are going they shall feel it. And you, too, trusting Christ without any sense of any good thing, shall not be long before you shall feel his blessed power upon your heart. I wish to speak my own experience simply to help those who are coming to Jesus. While I was coming to Christ I did not know that I was coming; and when I looked to Christ, I scarcely knew whether it was the right sort of look or no; but when I felt at last that Jesus had healed me, then I knew what I had done. Many a blessing God has given me as to which I have not found out that I had it till some time after my reception of it. I have read the feelings of certain good men, and I have said, "I wish I felt like them"; and some time after, when I looked back, I perceived that I was actually moving in their orbit, and passing through the self-same experience. Many a man wishes he was humble, and he is humble because he does not think he is humble. Many a person sighs, "I wish I had a tender heart," but I am sure that his heart is tender because he mourns its hardness. He longs to be deeply sensitive before the Lord, but it is clear that he has a tenderness which he does not himself recognise. His ideal of tenderness is very high, and properly so, and therefore he dreads falling short of it. O my dear friend, if you trust Jesus in the dark, you shall one day enter into the light; and if you never should enjoy comfort you would still be safe—if all the way between this place and heaven you should never have a consciousness of being saved, yet if you have trusted Christ, you must and shall be saved, for he cannot possibly allow faith in him to be exercised

in vain. Ere long, if you trust Jesus, you shall know his love. Trust him as you sink and you shall swim. Trust him as you feel yourself dying and you shall live. If you trust him before you feel any work of grace upon you, you shall soon discover that there was a work upon you, though you discerned it not. If you trust the Lord you are already the subject of a divine power, for nothing short of omnipotent grace could have led you to believe and live. The state and act of faith are simplicity itself; but to bring us into that simplicity God himself must new create us.

To put all in one, if you are ready to come to Christ, and trust him without any miracles, signs, or evidences, but will simply trust *him* alone, you have within you a power which will carry you through life, and preserve you in holiness even to the end. This morning I spoke about David's encouraging himself in God.* When Ziklag was burnt, and his wives were gone, and his men talked of stoning him, he fell back on God alone. This is a high attainment, and yet it is one which has its parallel in the very dawn of faith in the sinner. It is a grand start in life for you, a poor sinner, to begin by trusting Christ alone, saying, "I, without anything good in me whatever, without anything that I can lay hold of as a hope for me, do cast myself, whether I sink or swim, upon Christ Jesus the Saviour of sinners, and 'if I perish, I perish.'" This is a glorious beginning. To many a saintly life such a faith in the Lord alone has been a crowning act, and yet you, poor sinner, may exercise this same faith while yet you are a babe in Christ. You will often have to trust in this fashion in future life, and therefore it is well to begin as you will have to keep on. You will be brought, in business, in the family, and in the various trials of life, into such a condition that you will have to exercise a faith just of the same sort as that which you begin with; I would, therefore, have you learn the lesson while you are young. You will have to say, "Though I am weakness itself, and poverty itself, and do not see how I may be provided for, yet as the ravens and the sparrows are fed, so shall I be; and therefore I cast my nakedness upon God for clothing, and my hunger upon God for food, and my very life I cast upon him that he may preserve it to me between the jaws of death." This is grand faith, and you must begin there, for if you do not you have not begun to build on the rock. Your first course must be the live rock, or else all will be insecure. To begin well is half the battle: mind that you get a foundation which can never be moved; for life has many trials, and woe to the man whose foundation fails him.

This is grand faith to die with as well as to live with. Now the curtains are drawn and the light of the sun is shut out, and the voices of friends begin to fail, and the ear is dull, and the eye-strings break. My soul, thou art now about to launch into the unseen world. What wilt thou do now? What, indeed, but faint into the arms of thy Father and thy God! Oh, my dear hearer, if you have learned to trust at the very first because of what Jesus is, and not because of what you are, then you will know how to die; for standing there, in the prospect of the great account, or rather lying there upon the bed, in prospect

* No. 1,606. "Ziklag; or, David encouraging himself in God."

of the Lord's coming, fears will come, and doubts will come, and terrors will come, if you are looking within, or looking back upon your past life and trying to find a reliance there. But if you can say, "My Saviour, into thy hands I commit my spirit: my naked soul I put into thy pierced hands again," then may you breathe your last in peace, knowing whom you have believed, and being persuaded that he is able to keep that which you have committed to him until that day. When John Hyatt lay a-dying, one of his friends said, "Mr. Hyatt, can you trust your soul with Jesus now?" "Man," said he, "trust him with one soul? That is nothing. I could trust him with a million souls if I had them. I know that he is able to save all who trust him." I want you to begin, then, as these poor lepers did, by just taking Christ at his word, and going your way in the strength of that word before you feel any hopeful change within. In this fashion when you come to die you may look out for glory and expect it, though the brilliance has not yet transfigured you; you may look out for the eternal crown, look out for the harp, look out for the face of the Well-Beloved, and the bliss unspeakable, and expect them, even though the clouds gather around you. Before you pass the gates of pearl, or cross the chilly sea, you may enjoy the sight of the beatific vision by an unstaggering faith. Hope that is seen is not hope; but glorious is the faith which seeth him who is invisible, and grasps the substance of the things not seen as yet. By this power I even now anticipate the joys of the upper skies. Try, beloved, to do the same. O for more faith! It will be grand to know all heaven, though you have not seen it and felt it, because you knew and trusted the Lord of heaven. Hitherto you have found the promise true; now trust the Lord for glory as once you trusted him for grace, and you shall find ere long that his richest promises are sure.

God save you, every one of you, beloved; and may he do so at this very hour, for his dear Son's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke xvii.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—504, 593, 538.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHASTENED HAPPINESS.

A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 25TH, 1881, BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNAOLE, NEWINGTON.

“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”—Jeremiah xxxiii. 9.

GOD'S ancient people sadly provoked him with their idolatries from age to age. He was longsuffering to them to the last degree, but at length he grew weary of them, and according to his own words “he abhorred his own inheritance.” He caused them to be carried away into captivity, and their land became a desert, or the heritage of strangers. Israel became a people scattered and peeled, and on the brink of national extinction, for their iniquities had hidden the face of the Lord from them. Yet the Lord, even Jehovah, had entered into a covenant concerning them with Abraham his friend, which covenant he had afterwards renewed with his servant David. This latter covenant the Lord is said by the prophet Jeremiah to remember even when Jerusalem is desolate. We read in the twentieth verse and onward these words: “Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne.” Even in Israel's worst days, when her representative man was the weeping prophet Jeremiah, and when her sorrows were greater than even he could express, yet the Lord revealed his love, and promised that blessed days should dawn for the seed of Abraham. These days have not yet come, but they shall surely arrive, for God hath not cast away his people whom he did fore-know. There is yet a history for Israel; her sun is clouded, but it has not set. As surely as stands the covenant with day and night, so surely shall the chosen people return from their captivity and possess the land which the Lord has given unto them. In those days the Lord will build them as at the first, and cleanse them from all their iniquities. Then they shall not be proud or arrogant, for his goodness shall startle and astound them and they shall be amazed even unto trembling when they see what great things Jehovah has done for them. The memory of their great national offences, and especially of their long rejection of the Messiah, shall cause them to wear their high dignity without pride:

No. 1,686.

they shall be subdued by love to a childlike fear of again offending, they shall tremble as they see the Lord God of their fathers glorifying all his grace in them.

Thus much for the strict connection of the text. At this time we shall loosen the verse from its stall and bring it forth to our own pastures. Its primary signification is not its only teaching, for the words of the Lord are full of eyes, and look in many ways. We may use this promise in reference to all the Lord's people, for the promise is sure to all the seed. That which is true of the Jew one way is true of all the chosen seed in the same sense or in another. No privilege of the covenant is absolutely private either to Jew or Gentile; but in its highest form, if not in its lowest, it is the common property of all the heirs of salvation. We are joint heirs with Christ Jesus, and as he inherits all blessing, so also do we. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, has well said, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Let me, then, read the text again, and let us appropriate it to ourselves: "They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it." Such honour and blessing have all the saints.

Our text suggests at the outset the remark that all the good things which make up prosperity are to be traced unto the Lord. Woe unto us if we receive good and perfect gifts, and yet forget the Father of lights from whom they come. These benefits are not from beneath, but from above; let them not be passed by in ungrateful silence, but let us send upward humble and warm acknowledgments. He who forgets mercy deserves that mercy should forget him. God grant we may never be such practical atheists as to receive daily bounties from God, and not return a daily song. As each gleaming wave of the sea reflects the light of the sun, so let each ripple of our life flash with gratitude for the benediction of heaven. All good comes from the Altogether Good, who is of good the essence, the Creator, and the Giver. Especially is this true of all *spiritual* blessing,—of such goodness as comes not so much from benevolence to creatures as from mercy to sinners. As a being, I am grateful that my Creator is kind to me; but as a sinner, if my Judge smiles upon me, I admire his exceeding grace. His justice had left me unblest to perish through my sin, if his mercy had not found a way to spare and to cleanse. You who know not only your insignificance, but also your unworthiness, are held under special bonds to lift up your hearts in fervent gratitude to the Lord.

Remark next, that temporal mercies are always best when they come in their proper order. I have no doubt our text includes both temporal and spiritual good; but certainly the temporals are arranged in the second rank, for the eighth verse runs: "I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me"; and after this we have mention of goodness and prosperity. After pardon, peace and plenty are golden blessings; without it they might prove a curse. To an unforgiven sinner the richest enjoyments of this life are as the food which fattens the bullock for the slaughter, but when sin is pardoned, common mercies become tokens of a Father's love, and ripen beneath the sun of divine love into

an inexpressible sweetness. The children of God bless God for bread and water, because God has made these things matters of promise, and they come as covenant provisions. Cheered by grace, the child of poverty finds contentment in that which else might seem but prison fare. Much or little must depend upon the way in which you look upon it, and what to the believer is enough, might be to the worldling a mere pittance, because grace has not trained his mind to rejoice in the will of the Lord. Blessed be God if he has given to us first the fruits of the sun of grace, and then the fruits put forth by the moon of providence. The main thing is to be able to sing, "Bless the Lord, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases," and after that it is most pleasant to add, "who satisfieth thy mouth with good things."

What shall I say of the happiness of those persons who have spiritual and temporal blessings united, to whom God has given both the upper and the nether springs, so that they possess all things needful for this life in fair proportion, and then, far above all, enjoy the blessings of the life to come? Such are first blessed in their spirits and then blessed in their basket and in their store. In their case double favour calls for double praise, double service, double delight in God. Let them take for their example the Psalmist in the seventy-first psalm, who found himself increased in greatness, and comforted on every side, and then exclaimed, "I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed."

And yet, and yet, and yet, if we are very happy to-day, and though that happiness be lawful and proper, because it arises both out of spiritual and temporal things in due order, yet in all human happiness there lurks a danger. There is a wealth which hath a sorrow necessarily connected with it, and I ween that even when God maketh rich and addeth no sorrow therewith, yet he makes provision against an ill which else would surely come. Let me remind you of that memorable passage, "There the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." The Lord is all that to his believing people. But then broad rivers and streams have a danger appertaining to them, for these are waterways by which the pirates of the sea approach a city and plunder it; and hence for Zion's protection it is added, "Wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Thus the Lord gives the benefit without the danger naturally attendant upon it; he gives peace, but prevents carnal security, and he gives happiness but prevents the pride and presumption which are too apt to grow out of it. The text speaks of goodness and prosperity procured for us, and then tells us that all danger which might arise out of it is averted by a gracious work upon the heart. The Lord sends a chastened joy,—"they shall fear and tremble." Instead of unduly exulting in their possessions, and becoming high-minded and vainglorious, the Lord's people are kept lowly and self-distrustful, and thus their happiness brings glory to God, and the Lord's word is fulfilled, "It shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them." This then is our subject, the sanctifying and mellowing

of our joy. We shall try to see the Lord's loving wisdom in this matter, that we may the more wisely love him, and the more intelligently estimate his prudent conduct towards us. We shall first notice this *toning down of our joy*; and then in the second place we shall observe *the feelings by which this chastened effect is produced*; and thirdly, we shall look to *the measure in which most of us can enter into this experience* of a joy, toned and tinted by fear and trembling.

I. Let us think a little about THE TONING DOWN OF OUR GREAT JOYS. As I have said, we need grace in enjoying both temporal and spiritual prosperity, and therefore I shall speak upon them both. Even when we are filled with holy delight it is hard to carry a full cup with a steady hand. When most lifted up with spiritual joy we are not beyond gunshot of the enemy. We need the armour of God on the right hand as well as on the left. Even when we serve the Lord it must be with fear, and in his glorious presence we must rejoice with trembling.

In the cup of salvation there are drops of bitterness, and so must it be, for *unmixed delight in this world would be dangerous*. Unbroken prosperity in worldly things has proved perilous to many Christians. It is no theory, but a matter of sad fact, that many men, as they rise as to one world sink as to another. I am even afraid that long-continued health of body is not always for the health of a man's soul; and that to be without care and trouble, is not the readiest way to soul-prosperity. When the sea is smooth the ship makes poor sailing. Men are bird-limed by their rest and ease, and have small care to fly heavenward. We are apt to lose our God among our goods. Is it not so? If the world's roses had no thorns should we not think it paradise, and forego all desire for the gardens above? If Israel in Egypt had dwelt luxuriously, would a cry for deliverance have ever gone up to heaven? and had Pharaoh been content to ease their burdens, would they ever have marched for Canaan? Alas, we are apt to chill in our desires for heaven when we get to the warm side of the hedge, and hear the smooth side of the world's tongue. When the flowers of earth charm us we cast our eyes downward and forget the stars of heaven—at least, the danger lies that way.

Wise men dare not ask for unmingled prosperity, for they are not sure they can bear it. When first we travel to the south and escape this land of fog we delight without measure in the sunshine, and are anxious to bask in it throughout the livelong day. Do you wonder? Yet before long experience suggests a sunshade, for the stranger finds that his head cannot endure the full rays of the sun. In the same way many a man has suffered a sunstroke in his mind, and heart, and character, by making money too fast and prospering too much.

There is a danger of another kind in a spiritual experience which is all smooth and pleasant. You all remember the fate of Moab who had been at ease from his youth, and had become settled upon his lees; may it never be ours. Yet I have seen professors lose their balance while filled with delight. I am not one of those who would speak evil of excitement in religion: men get excited about politics, why should they not be excited about eternal things? Still, there is a kind of delirious religion abroad which I would have men avoid. Its joys are not calm

and quiet, but fanatical and noisy. Be ye sober. Do not give up the reins of your judgment and permit your feelings to run away with you. Some Christians have been so uniformly joyous that they have grown elated and self-conceited, even as Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. A few have even supposed themselves to be absolutely perfect while in the flesh—a mere supposition, disproved by their own want of modesty. We have seen brethren carry their heads so high that they could hardly understand a poor believer who was wrestling against sin, and in the strength of God overcoming his corruptions: they have become censorious, and have condemned their brethren as if they had been appointed to be judges in Israel to set up whom they would, and put down whom they chose. Repose of mind, caused as much by sound bodily health as by spiritual joy, has made men think uncharitably of sick and sorrowful saints, who have been very dear to Jesus, though very doubtful of themselves. Alas! a succession of excitements has, in some cases, bred self-sufficiency, and this has made men light-headed, and they have been carried away by divers heresies. Ecclesiastical history will tell you that some who have boasted of their high spiritual delights have gone far in vain imaginings, and have ended in the worst forms of immorality. It is an extraordinary fact that super-spirituality has often been found to dwell next door to sensuality, and men have turned the wine of holy love into the vinegar of lust. I need not go to ancient chronicles to prove this: a word to the wise suffices. Even spiritual joy needs a dash of salt, if not of wormwood, to be mingled with it. Holy delight needs to be coupled with sacred grief; repentance must go with faith, patience with hope, humility with full assurance, and conscious self-emptiness with a sense of the all-sufficiency of Christ.

I would remind you next, that *unmixed joy would be fallacious*, because there is no such thing here below. If a man should become perfectly contented with the things of this world, it would be the result of a false view of things. This is an error against which we should pray; for this world cannot fill the soul, and if a man thinks he has filled his soul with it, he must be under a gross delusion. What is the best thing of earth—but a bubble, tinted with rainbow hues, but unsubstantial as a dream? Every earthly joy hath within it the seeds of its own destruction? Oh man, if thou didst but know thyself, much more thy God, thou wouldst be assured that visible things can never satisfy the desires of a spiritual being.

As to spiritual joy, I say that in no man's experience can it be long without admixture and yet be true. Never at any moment can a Christian be in such a position that he has not some cause either for dissatisfaction with himself, or fear of the tempter, or anxiety to be faithful in service. Our streams of joy blend with currents of fear. Blessed be God, my sin is forgiven me: this joy calls up its balancing thought,—Oh that the Spirit of God may help me not to sin again. Again I sing,—Blessed be God, I have gotten the victory over an evil habit: but my song is followed by the prayer—Lord, enable me to conquer all evils, even those which as yet I know not. Thus joy and fear hang like the two scales of a balance,—I mean not the fear which love casts out, but the filial fear which love fosters. If God has preserved his

servant in the day of battle, he has no room to boast, for here comes another enemy. Temptations come wave after wave, and, having breasted one, we prepare for another. We cannot yet shout the victory, for, lo, the foes advance squadron upon squadron; their routed battalions are succeeded by new armies, and it behoves us to quit ourselves like men. We dwell where in our God we have the utmost reason for delight, but where in all things we perceive the most weighty arguments for solemnity. Rejoice evermore, but cease not to fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that the Lord has procured for you.

Once more, *unmixed delight on earth would be unnatural*. We are not in heaven yet, and perfect bliss lives not beneath these cloudy skies, nor within the pale sway of the moon. While we are in this body we groan, though we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, for we are in a creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Our years must have their winters while the world revolves. When the Dutch had the trade of the East in their hands they were accustomed to sell birds of paradise to the untravelled people of these realms. These specimen birds had no feet, for they had craftily removed them, and the merchants declared that the species lived on the wing and never alighted. There was so much of truth in the fable that had they been really and veritably "birds of paradise" they would not have found a place for their feet upon this globe. Truly, birds of paradise do come and go, and flit from heaven to earth, but we see them not, neither can we build tabernacles to detain them. While you are here expect reminders of the fact that this is not your rest. If you could attain to perfect joy on earth you might be justified in saying, "I have no longing for heaven; I am perfectly clear of sin, and care, and trouble; I may as well stay where I am. What need to go further if I can fare no better?" Let no man dream that things will ever come to this with him. Ah, ye lovely flowers of spring, this year ye have looked forth too soon. It is strangely mild weather for December, but spring has not yet arrived. Possibly it is so with some of my hearers: because the Lord is smiling upon you, it is very mild weather with your souls, and you dream that the winter of trouble is ended and that your heaven has begun. Be not deceived, you are not yet

"Where everlasting spring abides
And never-withering flowers."

Perhaps a touch of frost may do you good by preventing your getting into an unnatural and unsound condition.

Thus much, then, upon the first point, the toning down of our joys, which is wisely managed by our Father's wisdom and prudence.

II. Secondly, we are to see how this toning down is done, and observe THE FEELINGS BY WHICH THIS SOBERING EFFECT IS PRODUCED,—“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.” Why fear and tremble? Is not this in part a *holy awe of God's presence*? Remember that text, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The argument for fear and trembling is the work of God in the soul. Because God is working in you there must be no trifling. If the eternal Deity deigns

to make a workshop of my nature, I too must work, but it must be with fear and trembling.

So, then, the blessed presence of God in the believer's joy, and the very fact that he has worked it in him, is a cause for the fear and trembling which comes over the spirit of the joyous believer, and that I think is the first meaning of our text. God has been very good to me, unspeakably good to me, and I have plainly seen the traces of his fatherly hand in my life. Yea, I have so seen them that I have cried out with adoring amazement in many a Bethel, "How dreadful is this place! It is none other than the house of God and the very gate of heaven." So has it been with you, dear friends. When God has come very near to you in a blaze of mercy, when he has done things that you looked not for; when your mouth has been filled with laughter, and your tongue with singing because of his goodness, have you not at the same time felt overcome by the excess of his favour? Have you not been able to sympathize with Peter when, at the sight of his boat full of fish, he cried "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Have you not felt a solemn trembling like Manoah when he feared that he must die, because he had seen an angel of the Lord? I know it has been so with you. A little mercy would have made you sing, but a great mercy has made you sit in silence before the Lord, or fall on your knees in adoration. A common providence would have charmed you, but an extraordinary providence has overwhelmed you; you have lain in the dust at Jesus' feet, feeling yourself to be but dust and ashes, and yet every particle of dust has been full of wondering love to God. This is one way in which God keeps his people right in the days of their joy: where a shallow drink might have intoxicated, he gives so deep a draught that the danger is past, and holy wonder takes the place of unholy pride.

But next to that there rises up in the mind of every favoured Christian a deep repentance for past sin. He asks himself this question, "How could I have lived as I have done when God has entertained such love towards me?" When I discovered the election of God's grace, and when I saw at what a price I had been redeemed by our Lord Jesus, I was ashamed of all my evil ways. When I read my name inscribed on the palms of Jesus' hands, when I understood that I was united to him by a union that never could be broken, I said to myself, "What a thousand fools I have been to have lived forgetful of my highest glory, unmindful of my dearest friend!" To have lived year after year in open enmity against my Lord seemed like a grim and ghastly dream, almost too horrible to be true. Have you not felt the same? Have you not felt ashamed and confounded at the memory of your former life? Have you not felt as if you could never open your mouth any more because of all your unkindness to your heavenly friend? Such penitent reflections keep the Lord's people right, by creating a fear and trembling in the presence of his overflowing goodness.

Let me ask you another question. Has not your deepest sense of unworthiness come upon you when you have been conscious of superlative mercy? When the Lord has scourged and chastened you, you have seen your sins in your sorrows, and have been ashamed: but, by the memory of his great goodness, you have been far more corrected and humbled. When our secret sins are set in the light of God's

countenance, it is a light indeed! Oh, the shame my soul has known when the Lord has caressed me, when he has kissed me with the kisses of his mouth. Then I have said, "Ah, Lord, whence is this to me? What am I that thou dost deal thus lovingly with me?" It was when Jehovah came and showed himself to Job, not in chastening, not with fire of God, or whirlwind, nor with sore boils and blains, but as his own dear covenant God, it was then that Job said, "Now mine eye seeth thee, therefore I abhor myself in dust and ashes." Love makes the crimson of sin more red than ever. Blood-bought pardon makes sin look black as sackcloth of hair. I tell you, sirs, it is not the flames of hell, but the glories of heaven, that most of all fill us with trembling before the Lord. Nothing touches the heart like undeserved and unexpected love. Love's glance flashes to the very core of the heart, and makes the offender, like Peter, go forth and weep bitterly. Do we not each cry, "Would God I could never sin again. Oh, that I could perfectly serve my God without a slip, even to my last day, because of his great love to me." We tremble and are afraid, because of the unutterable grace which has met our utter unworthiness, and rivalled it, until grace has gotten unto itself the victory.

Have you never noticed how the Lord brings his people to their bearings, and keeps them steady, under a sense of great love, by suggesting to their hearts the question, "*How can I live as becometh one who has been favoured like this?*" Did you ever feel that the glory of the palace of love made you afraid to dwell in it? When you have put on your best apparel, those garments which are whiter than any fuller on earth could make them, the matchless righteousness of God, have you not felt fearful of defiling your robes? Did you ever see yourselves adorned as a bride for her husband in all the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and have you not said to yourselves "What manner of people ought we to be?" You have scarcely known which way to turn, or how to move. You feared to walk lest you should defile those silver sandals and those feet so newly washed; you did not know what to touch for fear you should stain those hands which Christ had jewelled with his love and made white as ivory with his effectual cleansing. Have you not felt as if you dared not speak till you had prayed, "Lord, open thou my lips." You have been afraid to look for fear your eyes should glance on evil; and therefore you have prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." There has been such a fear, such a caution, such a holy jealousy upon you that, instead of being uplifted by favour, you have been humbled thereby. Grace never makes a man vain. When a soul is adorned with glory and beauty, and made to shine like the star of the morning, it owns its borrowed comeliness and brightness, and is mildly radiant with reflected rays. When raised up by the special favour of our God into communion with himself, we are afraid of trespassing against the decorum of almighty love, fearful of violating the propriety of sovereign grace. The Lord our God is a jealous God; and he will be had in reverence of those who are round about him. This fact has made us feel like those apostles who were filled with fear as well as with great joy. To know how to behave ourselves in the house of God has been our anxiety. We have felt like a poor countryman, bred and born in the wilds, who finds himself

in a court, and feels strange in such a place. Thus have we been clothed with humility as we have worn the garments of praise. Exalted to be kings and priests, our kingdom and priesthood have called forth our careful thought, and vainglory has thus been banished.

And have you never felt *a fear lest God's goodness should be abused by you?* I have been smitten to the very heart as with a secret blow in moments of delight, when I have thought, "And suppose, after all, I should not serve God faithfully in my favoured position, and should not be approved of him at the last? What if I should seem to be an apostle, and prove to be a Judas? What if I should speak of Christ, and yet be nothing better than a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal?" That heart-piercing fear will wound pride if anything will. Have you never been thus put to the question by your conscience? Have not other questions arisen of a similar character? You have seen your children around you, and you have been happy with them, but have you not thought, "How if I should not train them aright, and they should grow up to be a sorrow to me, and a dishonour to the church of God?" When prospered in business, have you never said to yourself, "What if I should become a worshipper of the golden calf? What if covetousness should eat out the heart of my devotion? What if, when my Master calls me to account for my talents, he should cast me away for having hid them in a napkin?" Have you never been tried by such thoughts? If you have never thus examined yourself, you had better do so at once. He who has never questioned his own condition had better make an immediate enquiry. He who has never felt great searchings of heart needs to be searched with candles. It is idle to take things for granted, for all of us must be tried by fire, and even "the righteous scarcely are saved." No man's hell shall be more terrible than that of the self-confident one who made so sure of heaven that he would not take the ordinary precaution to ask whether his title-deeds were genuine or no.

One more thought may also occur to the most joyous believer. He will say, "*What if after rejoicing in all this blessedness I should lose it?*" "What," cries one, "do you not believe in the final perseverance of the saints?" Assuredly I do, but are we saints? There's the question. Moreover, many a believer who has not lost his soul has, nevertheless, lost his present joy and prosperity, and why may not we? The good man has shone as a star of the first magnitude, but suddenly he has dwindled into darkness: he has been unwatchful, and in consequence by the dozen years together he has had to go softly in the bitterness of his soul. We have known fathers in Israel who have stepped aside, and though they have by deep repentance found their way to heaven, they have gone sorrowing thither. Look at David's history. Who happier all the early part of his life? Note that one sin with Bathsheba, and ask who more tried and troubled than David throughout the rest of his pilgrimage? The doctrine of final perseverance was never intended for the comfort of any who are afraid of self-examination, or who are not watchful; for it is by no means at variance with the other doctrine that many who made sure of heaven in their own minds will never enter there, because Jesus never knew them. Great joy may be only a meteor, great excitement may be a mirage of the desert, great confidence may be a will-o'-the-wisp luring to destruction. The highest seats in the

synagogue do not secure for their occupants a place among the shining ones above. Many rejoicing professors will yet discover that their spot was not the spot of God's people, and their song was not the new song which God doth put into the mouth. And what if that should be your case and mine? So, when I stand upon my high mountain, let me pray, "Lord, hold thou me up." Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall, for he is the man who is most in danger. He who is fullest of holy delight is still to watch, for did not Jesus say, "What I say unto you I say unto all, watch?" God grant that we may be helped to watch against the arrow which flieth by day as much as against the pestilence which walketh in darkness.

Thus you see how the Lord, by working upon our innermost feelings, sobers us in the hour of joy, even as the text hath it,—“They shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”

III. By way of practical application, let us now consider THE MEASURE IN WHICH YOU AND I CAN ENTER INTO THIS EXPERIENCE. I thought to myself, if I begin to make individual applications I shall have before me a never-ending task, because every man has had a distinct experience of this truth if he has safely stood upon the high places of joy. We have hundreds of us perceived the benefits of the dark lines and shadings of life's picture, and we see how fit and proper it is that trembling should mingle with transport. As the fruit of experience I have learned to look for a hurricane soon after an unusually delightful calm. When the wind blows hard, and the tempest lowers, I hope that before long there will be a lull; but when the sea-birds sit on the wave, and the sail hangs idly, I wonder when a gale will come. To my mind there is no temptation so bad as not being tempted at all. The worst devil in the world is when you cannot see the devil at all, because the villain has hidden himself away within the heart, and is preparing to give you a fatal stab.

“More the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests thundering overhead.”

This general statement may suffice, and as I cannot make an application to each one personally, I think I will apply the truth to this church as a whole. When this building was not yet ready for opening we held a meeting in it, and I remember among the speakers there was one who is now with God, Mr. Jonathan George, of Walworth, and he made use of this text in a little speech that he made:—He said, “It would be well for us all to remember, when God blesses us with any measure of prosperity, that prosperity is very hard to bear. How is that? Cannot Christianity or the grace of God bear it? No, it is because of the extreme carnality and pride of our hearts. Here is a portion of Scripture we should all recollect: ‘They shall fear and tremble for all the prosperity that I send.’ It is a blessing when God has succeeded our poor efforts, and poured out a blessing upon us, if we are jealous of our own hearts, and fear and tremble. Oh God, how rich, how beneficent thou art! Let us not lose thy full blessing by our own pride; by pointing to some second cause, and saying, ‘It was I; it was ourselves; it was our ministers.’” Verily I say unto you the words of the man of

God have been fulfilled. How I have feared and trembled because the Lord's mercy to us has been so extraordinary. As a church we have enjoyed so many years of growth, and prosperity, and unity, and happiness, that one is apt to fear that it cannot last much longer. Certainly it cannot be perpetuated except by fresh power from the Lord who is wonderful in working. One begins to think, "Must not something happen to spoil our concord? Will power always continue with the word preached? Will not the candle burn low in the socket? Such holy jealousy, if faith be also active, will help to keep us right. Evils may be prevented by the foresight of them. Through grace, by our fear of falling we may be helped to stand.

Brethren, we are just now in a critical time of our life as a church. Whatever of novelty there was about our movements has long since vanished, and those who came among us from curiosity know us no more. Your pastor's ministry cannot be expected to be as fresh and vigorous as it used to be, for upon his head the grey hairs far outnumber the darker ones, and perhaps grey hairs are stealing over his preaching too. If natural vigour fails, now is the time to see whether the power which has sustained us be of God or no. We know what the answer to the text will be—out of weakness we shall be made strong.

Besides, my brethren, certain invaluable helpers who were with us in the beginning—and rare men they were—are going home; one by one our leaders are being called away: will more be found? Will they be of equal worth and weight? I know they will; yet, these are solemn questions. We are in the middle of the river now, and in the middle the river is deepest and hardest to ford. Now we need that underneath us there should be the everlasting arms. I am weaker than ever, you also are weaker than ever; but the eternal God fainteth not. We have the same old gospel, and you will not grow tired of it, though it is preached by the same old Spurgeon. The Holy Spirit will abide with us, and that will make up for the weakness of our spirit. You who have been earnest at prayer will not, I hope, lose your zeal, for the mercy-seat is still accessible.

To persevere is the difficulty. It would be easy to burn at a stake for five minutes; but to be surrounded with smouldering faggots of green wood, and to burn by slow degrees, would be torture indeed; yet such is the patience of saints. Keeping up your burning zeal, your personal holiness, your evangelizing efforts, and all your spiritual works after twenty-seven years is no mean test of your faith. He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved. Yes, brethren, these are the thoughts that come into my mind, and prevent my ever saying we have done well, and may rest on our oars. Far from anything like exaltation or self-congratulation, I feel more than ever inclined to lie low at the feet of my Master and kiss the very dust he stands upon. I feel more disqualified, more unsuitable, more unable for my Lord's work than ever, and yet I am glad in the Lord, and find joy in his name. Since there is an everlasting arm that never can be palsied, since there is a brow that knows no wrinkle, and a divine mind that is never perplexed, we go forward in hope, and cast ourselves upon our eternal helper once again. You have heard of the ancient giant Antæus, who could not be overcome, because as often as Hercules threw him to the ground, he

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COOMBE LODGE, PECKHAM, LONDON, S.E.

The following is an Extract from the "CHRISTIAN HERALD" (Edited by Rev. M. BAXTER), August 25th, 1880.

"Our attention has been called to a pamphlet on the treatment of this terrible malady, and on Asthma and diseases of the lungs in general, by Mr. Geo. Thos. Congreve, of Coombe Lodge, Peckham—a Christian gentleman, well known to most of our leading ministers, Mr. Spurgeon among the rest, who at a recent meeting spoke very highly of him, stating that many members of his Church and students of his College had consulted him with remarkable success. One instance in Mr. Congreve's work deserving special notice is that of Rev. Jas. Smith, formerly of the College, who was restored after the case had been pronounced hopeless. Other extraordinary cases are related by Mr. Spurgeon's first student (Rev. T. W. Modhurst, of Portsmouth), and many more from ministers too numerous to mention.

"The author has studied the subject for many years, both at the London Hospital and with his father, and in a private sphere of observation, enlarging year by year. We are glad to hear of his continued success, and confidently recommend a perusal of the work.

"A lady at Tunbridge Wells, whose name and full address may be obtained from Mr. Congreve, writing May 29th, 1880, says:—'Your treatment of Consumption has been the means not only of saving my life, but of restoring me to vigorous health. I am glad to use every opportunity of commending it to friends suffering with the same disease.'

"The following is from Rev. John S. Alsop, Pastor of Zion Chapel, Hurton-on-Trent:—

"64, Branstone Road, May 2nd, 1880.

"Dear Sir,—I have found the four bottles of medicine very useful. One case is that of a young woman, very poor, to whom I gave it. She is now so much better that she can work, and come to chapel. *The change is wonderful!* Now, will you send me four more on the same low terms, for the same purpose? If you think it worth while to use my letter, do so."

"The Rev. W. B. Booth, of the East End Christian Mission, writes:—'I am thankful to tell you that in several cases medicine had from you has been extremely beneficial, especially so in the case of one of our female evangelists.' We are glad to say that

Mr. Congreve's remedies are not expensive in any case."

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And which is admitted by the Profession to be the most wonderful and valuable remedy ever discovered.

is the best remedy known for Coughs, Consumption, Bronchitis, Asthma.

effectually checks and arrests those too often fatal diseases—Diphtheria, Fever, Croup, Ague.

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effectually cuts short all attacks of Epilepsy, Hysteria, Palpitation and Spasms.

is the only palliative in Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Gout, Cancer, Toothache, Meningitis, &c.

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Earl Russell communicated to the College of Physicians that he had received a dispatch from Her Majesty's Consul at Manila, to the effect that Cholera had been raging fearfully, and that the ONLY remedy of any service was CHLORODYNE.—See *Lancet*, December 31, 1864.

CAUTION—BEWARE OF PIRACY AND IMITATIONS.—CAUTION—Vice-Chancellor Sir W. Page Wood stated that Dr. J. Collis Browne was undoubtedly the Inventor of Chlorodyne; that the story of the defendant, Freeman, was deliberately untrue, which, he regretted to say, had been sworn to—See *Times*, July 13, 1864.

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Manchester, June 12th, 1874

PAGE WOODCOCK'S
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To Mr. PAGE D. WOODCOCK, Norwich.

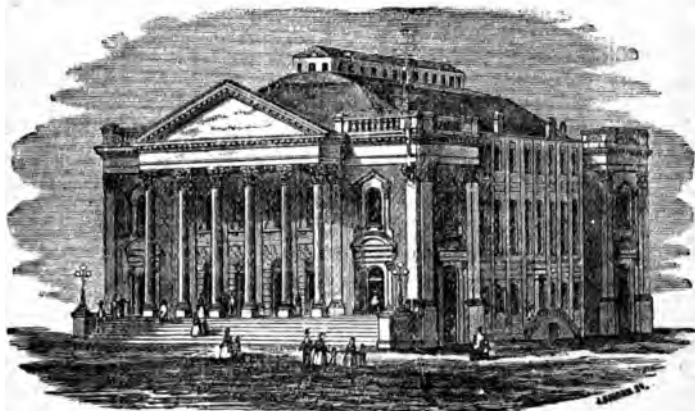
Certainly of their action, commend them to those who require a Tonic to assist digestion, relieve Wind in the Stomach, exert a special influence on the Liver, and also the peristaltic motion of the bowels, resulting in Chronic Indigestion and lack of Assimilation. The more my experience in their varied applicability extends the more their beneficial effects appear, and many households have found a great friend in your preparation for the promotion of a healthy digestion. The favourable action are all that could be wished for.

I am, Sir, respectfully yours,
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1,594.—THE CANDLE.
1,595.—THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

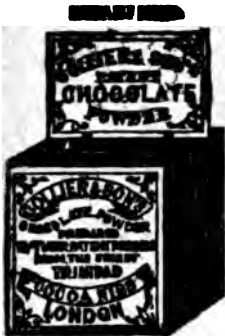
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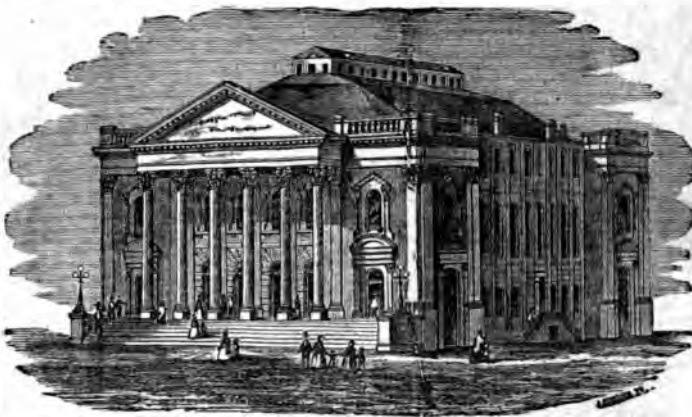
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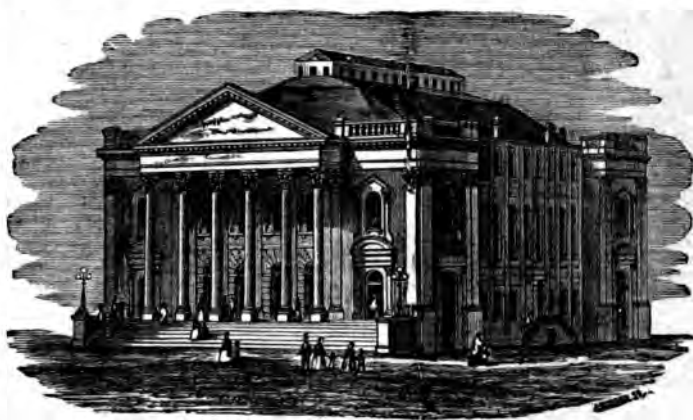
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WHAT THEY CANNOT DO.
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1,605.—JESUS KNEW WHAT HE WOULD DO

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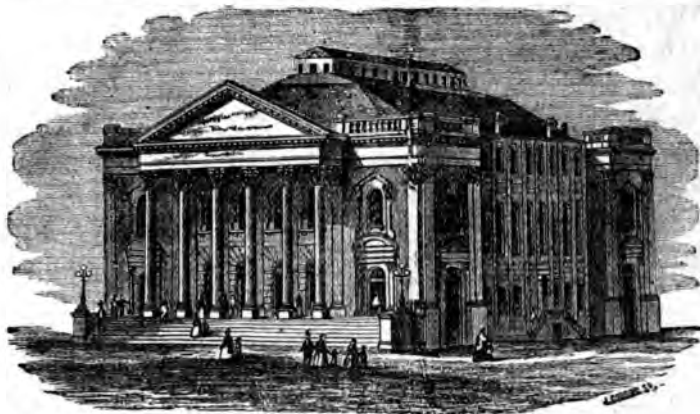
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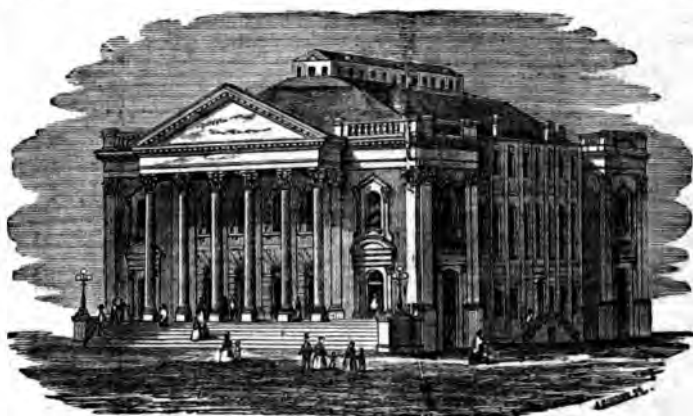
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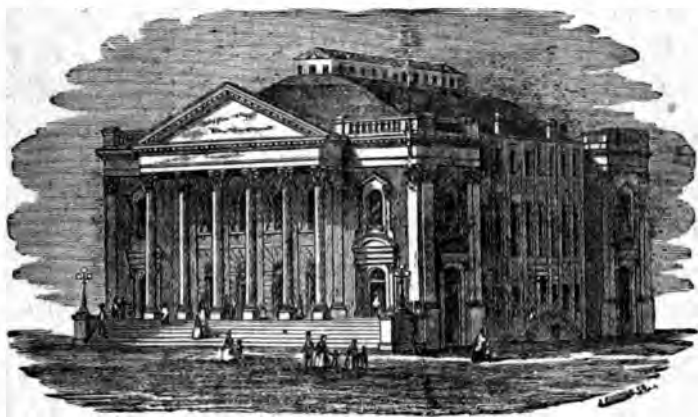
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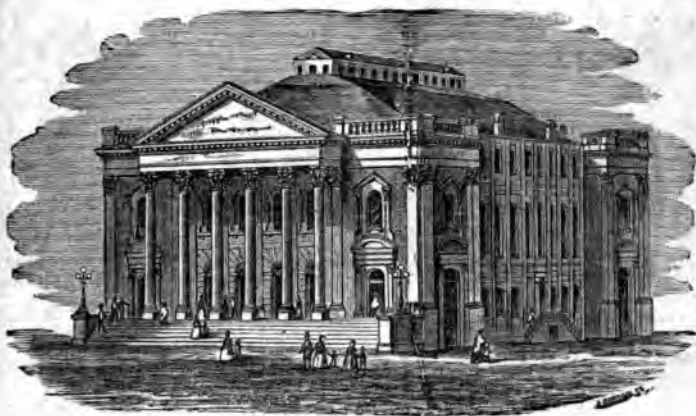
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